



Reagan strikes at Libya, Nicaragua, Afghanistan

Flashpoints for war

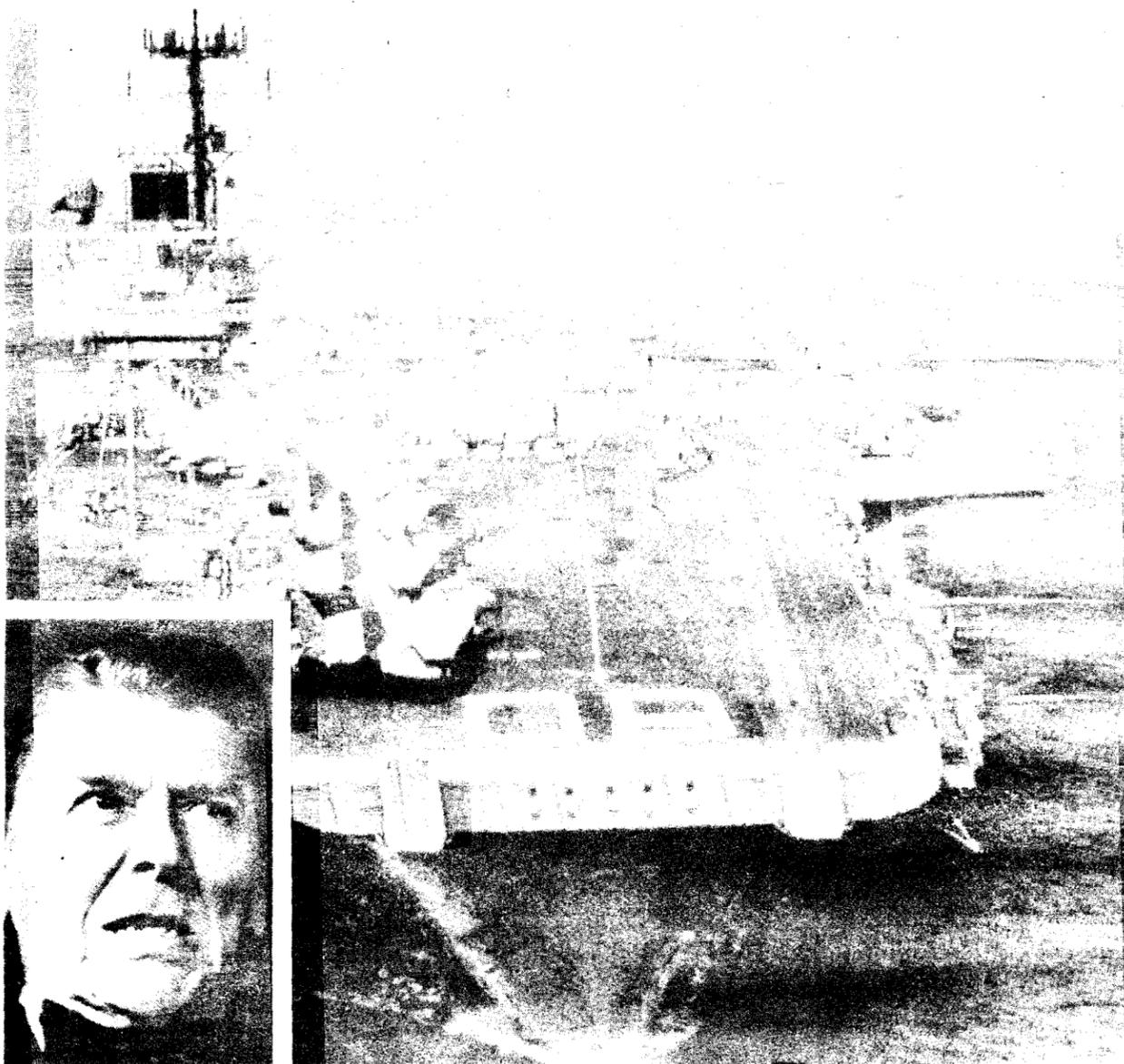
US hands off Libya! Defend the Soviet Union!

The White House declared 'Operation Prairie Fire', the brazen American attack on Libya, an unqualified success. A Navy armada, with three aircraft carriers, 30 warships and hundreds of planes, managed to sink some Libyan patrol boats and hit a missile site where Russian technicians were reportedly installing Soviet SAMs. The no-fault president had found the no-risk military option so US imperialism could flex its muscle 'without loss of life or damage to American planes or ships'. War Secretary Caspar Weinberger crowed. The Reaganites' war 'game' in the Gulf of Sidra was supposed to teach the 'bully' Qaddafi a bloody lesson and send a message to Moscow.

And while throughout Western Europe, many of Reagan's NATO allies expressed some unease with his insane war provocations, the Iron Bitch of Downing Street proved again to be his most steadfast ally. 'It is important that international waters and air space be kept open and we support their right to do so', said Thatcher in the Commons. And all Labour leader Neil Kinnock could manage by way of 'opposition' was to whimper about more effective ways of strengthening imperialist hegemony over the Mediterranean, like levelling sanctions against Libya. In this confrontation, the world's working class had a side: with Libya against the insane war provocations of US imperialism.

Of course, the Libyan boats never fired a shot, and the only evidence of SAMs being fired were blips on a radar screen that were not reported to journalists on board the USS *Saratoga* at the time because the Navy wasn't sure they were real. Commenting on the Gulf of Sidra action, Admiral William Crowe, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, noted: 'I would say these operations may lead us to revise our opinion of Gaddafi's rationality. Once we made it clear that we were determined to stay there, he withdrew his forces, and I consider that a very rational act' (*Sunday Times*, 30 March).

The next week, however, when a bomb blew a hole in the fuselage of a TWA jetliner over



USS *Saratoga*, part of US Sixth Fleet which launched attack on Libya. Reagan's insane war provocations are part of NATO's anti-Soviet drive to nuclear World War III. Trotskyists say: US Hands off Libya! Defend the Soviet Union!

Greece, killing four, and another blast in Berlin destroyed a disco frequented by GIs, the US declared it would 'hold Qaddafi responsible' for these wanton acts of indiscriminate terror. No matter that the Libyan strongman had condemned the TWA bomb as 'an act of terrorism against a civilian target, and I am totally against this'. It fitted a 'pattern' of Libyan terrorism, said Washington. The pattern is that Reagan will blame anything and everything on Qaddafi (and Gorbachev) if it furthers the anti-Soviet war drive.

The US aggression against Libya came on the heels of an even more insane war provocation in the Black Sea, in which two Navy spy ships invaded Soviet territorial waters near the port of Sevastopol, headquarters of the 'Red Banner' fleet. And just as American F-14s were firing their Harpoon and HARM missiles over the Mediterranean, half-way around the globe in Central America US Chinook helicopters were ferrying Honduran troops up to the Nicaraguan frontier, doing their best to set off a border war in order

to get Congress to approve \$100 million in aid to the CIA contra terrorists. When at first Honduras declined to claim it had been invaded by the Sandinista army, Washington threatened to cut off its dollars. When they saw the light in Tegucigalpa, the US promptly supplied the Honduran military with \$20 million in unsolicited aid. And the next day the Senate dutifully approved the contra aid bill.

The Cold War hawks were off and running. In addition to their 'show of force' in the Black Sea, the Med and Central America, the US set off an atomic bomb in Nevada, thereby rejecting Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's offer of a moratorium on nuclear testing; and word leaked out that the CIA is delivering Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to US-backed counter-revolutionaries attacking Soviet-backed Afghanistan and Angola. They're planning to do the same for the Nicaraguan contras, it was reported, as well as despatching Green Beret advisers, as soon as the Democrats on Capitol

continued on page 5

**Eyewitness Tripoli:
Under Reagan's
guns ... p3**

Workers Power:

Nobody here but us opportunists

It's a funny sort of group that goes around asking itself if it's sectarian, as does the April *Workers Power* article titled 'Is Workers Power sectarian?' Insecure, you might say. Well, Workers Power is a funny -- in Marxist terms, centrist -- sort of group: a mix of left-sounding 'revolutionary' rhetoric and the usual opportunist politics of the British fake left. So WP, for example, will denounce the Labour Party -- even 'sacred cows' like Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner -- and then call for a 'loyalty oath' to that same party. Or, it will tell you how Solidarnosc was out to restore capitalism in Poland and 'criticise' it severely, but support it nonetheless. That does get you feeling a bit funny in the head after a while.

In the circles WP travels, 'sectarianism' has nothing to do with any precise Marxist definition. It's a swear word for those 'crazy' Marxists -- like us -- who actually stand for

defence of the Soviet Union when the ruling class and its labour lieutenants rant hysterically against 'Russian totalitarianism', who call for splitting workers away from the Labour misleaders ('left' and right), in short, who fight for the principles of socialist revolution. That's why these people usually spell sectarian S-p-a-r-t-a-c-i-s-t. So what's WP getting worked up about?

These classical centrists try to play both sides of the street. They've spent years trying to carve out their own little corner of the pro-Labour, anti-Soviet club -- of which they are members in good standing -- as the 'left' critics-in-residence. And every once in a while this sort of thing gives people the wrong impression that WP sounds a little bit like the real thing, the Spartacists. A case in point was John Lister's article in the March issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*, the mouthpiece for a tiny band of Kinnock-lovers around scab

Alan Thornett in Oxford. Out to warn supporters of the Banda/Slaughter Workers Revolutionary Party against the mortal sin of 'sectarianism', Lister launched a tirade against the 'danger of predatory raids by fanatical sectarians such as the Spartacists or the home-grown Workers Power, who feed off the casualties of demoralisation'. (Lister should know a thing or two about this, since he and Thornett were themselves turned into demoralised casualties following two cadre-rich splits from their organisation to ours.)

But for WP this is the ultimate insult: 'The truth is that our positions on virtually every major question are the polar opposites of those embraced by the iSt.' And the most major question in this period is the Russian question, particularly expressed in Polish Solidarnosc. The line separating 'loyal opposition' to the Labour traitors from 'danger-

continued on page 11

Quote of the month



Defend the Soviet Union!

Trotsky and Lenin

Today, as the imperialists seem hell-bent on provoking a world war with the Soviet Union, defence of the gains of the October Revolution is critical. In a speech on 15 October 1939, shortly after the outbreak of World War II, James P Cannon, veteran communist and a founder of American Trotskyism, reaffirmed this Trotskyist commitment.

The International Left Opposition which originated in 1923 as an opposition in the Russian party (the original nucleus of the Fourth International) has always taken a precise attitude on the Russian question... [A]fter it became manifest that the reactionary bureaucracy could be removed only by civil war, the Fourth International, standing as before on its analysis of the Soviet Union as a workers' state, came out for a political revolution.

All the time throughout this entire period of 16 years the Bolshevik-Leninists have stoutly maintained, in the face of all slander and persecution, that they were the firmest defenders of the workers' state and that in the hour of danger they would be in the front ranks of its defense. We always said the moment of danger will find the Fourth Internationalists at their posts defending the conquests of the great revolution without ceasing for a moment our struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy. Now that the hour of danger is at hand -- now that the long-awaited war is actually knocking at the door -- it would be very strange if the Fourth International should renege on its oft-repeated pledge.

-- James P Cannon, *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* (1943)

The 'Leninist' school of imitation

'At the time of Solidarnosc's [sic] genesis in the huge upheavals of Polish workers' unrest in the Baltic ports in 1980, there was a real basis for seeing the whole movement as a contradictory phenomenon. On the one hand, there were the legitimate grievances of many workers offended and alienated by long years of bureaucratic mismanagement by the Polish Communist Party... On the other hand, however, was the channel through which this unrest expressed itself: clerical nationalism and pro-imperialism. By the time of Solidarnosc's first congress in 1981, it had consolidated a programme for counterrevolution in Poland... 'With very little time left, the leadership of the PUWP at last moved to make the best of a bad job. They imposed martial law and thankfully snapped the back of Solidarnosc's [sic] counterrevolutionary bid for power [sic].'

Sounds familiar? This succinct, if partial, summary of the Spartacist analysis of Polish Solidarnosc comes not from our press however, but from an article entitled 'Solidarnosc comes clean' in the March issue of the Communist Party-loyal *Leninist*. It's not the first time they've ripped us off -- no sooner had we labelled Roy Lynk & Co the 'British Solidarnosc' than the 'Leninist' took up the phrase -- but this latest hijack takes the biscuit. Not only is our analysis imitated but so is virtually our entire article, 'Solidarnosc loves Thatcher' (*Workers Hammer* no 76, February 1986), right down to two-year old quotes from *Socialist Organiser*. The 'Leninist' certainly knows where to go for real Leninism.

Whilst their article berates 'the vast majority of the Trotskyite groups' for supporting Solidarnosc it remains tactfully coy about the genuine Trotskyists who opposed Walesa's scab outfit -- the Spartacist tendency. This is hardly surprising. Not only would it reveal the source of the *Leninist* Editorial Board's inspiration but it would also reveal the absolute bankruptcy of the 'Leninist' programme for Poland. Whilst we fight for workers political revolution to establish soviet democracy through ousting the Stalinist bureaucracy -- which nurtured a mass counterrevolutionary movement through its bureaucratic mismanagement, conciliation of the peasantry and sellouts to international imperialism which are part and parcel of Stalinist 'socialism in one country' -- the 'Leninist' calls for ... 'renewal' of the Polish CP.

With this position it is hardly surprising that the 'Leninist' has never uttered a single significant word about the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, even astonishingly omitting any reference to it when it describes the 1956-57 split from the CPGB to the Healy group, which is commonly known to have been over the question of the Hungarian uprising! When the Hungarian workers went out on the streets to

fight for soviet democracy against the Stalinist usurpers on the basis of defence of the collectivised economy, the Hungarian CP disintegrated. The overnight shattering of the bureaucratic apparatus, a large part of which went over to the insurgent workers, vindicated the Trotskyist analysis of the Stalinist bureaucracy as a brittle, contradictory caste formation and the Trotskyist programme of proletarian political revolution. Where would the 'Leninist' stand, with the Hungarian workers or trying to 'renew' Janos Kadar behind Khrushchev's tanks?

Such bouts of discreet 'silence' are quite common for the 'Leninist'. At the height of the miners strike they organised a joint meeting with Solidarnosc-lovers, and fellow ballot-mongers, Workers Power. Despite sharing a platform and having many floor speakers not a single 'Leninist' mentioned Solidarnosc, hardly a side issue in the strike. Clearly, there are principles and principles.

Whilst the *Leninist* Editorial Board scavenged their *Workers Hammer* backfile, one 'Alec Long' was busy penning a letter to the same March issue. The 'chauvinist' Spartacist League didn't carry a banner on this year's Bloody Sunday demo, he reveals. Horrors! But neither did the 'Leninist', instead marching behind the banner of the 'Irish Republican Support Group (CPGB)', which only a few months ago the 'Leninist' was attacking for not being fulsome enough in support of the Eurocommunist CPGB against the *Morning Star*. 'Alec Long' feigns outrage at our call for 'anti-sectarian workers militias to fight Orange and Green terror'. Our strategy of seeking to mobilise both Catholic and Protestant workers to fight British army and Loyalist terror as well as Green nationalist outrages such as the 1976 Bessbrook massacre or the 1982 Ballykelly bombing is crucial to winning the proletariat away from both Orange and Green nationalists and to the Leninist programme of workers revolution. The 'Leninist' offers the masses in Ireland nothing but the traditional British left fare of tailing the nationalist IRA/INLA.

They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery but the 'Leninist' flatters to deceive its readership. They may occasionally ape our analysis but when it comes to programmatic conclusions they bed down with the rest of the British fake left in tying the British proletariat to the Labour bureaucracy -- only the 'Leninist' bizarrely wants to do it through the medium of the cadaver of the SDP-loving CPGB. If you are looking for intransigent defence of the Soviet degenerated workers state against both pro-imperialist counterrevolution and Stalinist treachery, for class opposition to British imperialism and for a communist struggle to split the Labour Party, in a word genuine Leninism, then look to the Spartacist tendency! ■

WORKERS HAMMER

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

EDITORIAL BOARD: Len Michelson (editor), Jon Branche, Alec Gilchrist, John Masters, Eibhlin McDonald, Fred Purdy, Ellen Rawlings

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Patricia Matthews

Published monthly, except in January and August, by Spartacist Publications, PO Box 185, London WC1H 8JE

Subscriptions: 10 issues for £2.00, overseas airmail £5.00

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

Printed by Slough Newspaper Printers Ltd (TU). ISSN 0267-8721.

Under Reagan's guns in Libya

A journalistic team of the international Spartacist tendency arrived in Tripoli on 26 March. We were there with our physical presence to establish our proletarian internationalist commitment to the military defence of Libya against the barbaric attacks of US imperialism and its allies. As war-crazed Ronald Reagan flexed his trigger finger, we

Report from Tripoli

came prepared to help in any way we can where the US war drive is hottest right now -- and to denounce before the world's working class the acts of aggression against Libya by the imperialist terrorists.

Our arrival was preceded by a telegram sent by the iSt from New York addressed to Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi. The statement read: 'We deeply respect and support just cause of Libyan independence and territorial integrity against assault by U.S. imperialist aggression.'

As we arrived Reagan's massive Sixth Fleet armada -- with its 30 naval vessels, including 3 carriers and 240 warplanes -- was carrying out its assault against the Libyan people. The frenzy whipped up by Reagan and the bourgeois press was at its peak. The cold-blooded order to shoot and kill was aimed not only at Libya but at the Soviet Union as well. Soviet personnel were servicing the missile site at Sirte bombed by US planes. The US missile cruiser *Yorktown*, the warship that led the attack on the Gulf of Sidra, had just returned from carrying out the provocation against the Soviet naval base at Sevastopol on the Black Sea. Military support to this small country under Reagan's guns is integrally linked to the burning need of the international proletariat to rally to the defence of the Soviet Union.

Telegram

25 March 1986

Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi
Chief of State
Tripoli, Libya

We deeply respect and support just cause of Libyan independence and territorial integrity against assault by U.S. imperialist aggression.

Spartacist League/U.S.
international Spartacist tendency

The iSt team included an Italian, an American of Jewish background and a French woman. We wished to cut across lines of national hatred and demonstrate solidarity from the working class movement of imperialist countries that have ravished Libya and other colonial peoples. We made clear our desire to interview survivors and relatives of the victims of the barbarous aggression as well as official representatives of the government, and expressed our willingness to speak to any audience about the class struggle in our own countries.

At the airport in Tripoli we delivered our statement from the iSt to Libyan officials there. They smiled and shook our hands. Later they drove us along with other journalists to the Al Kabir Hotel overlooking Tripoli harbour. It was obvious that the Libyan government genuinely extended itself to invite reporters into the country. Normal visa requirements were waived. There were upwards of 150 reporters and cameramen at the hotel, mostly from the US, British, French, Italian and Japanese press. From the beginning it was clear that the government had taken many steps to guarantee the safety of the foreign journalists whilst their own people were facing the American Sixth Fleet. It turned out that this was not so necessary but we appreciated their efforts.

We were somewhat surprised to find out in Tripoli that we were the only Western left-wingers in town: one would have expected that some of the various groups claiming to be socialists and even Trotskyists would be present. The Italian CP paper *L'Unita* is one of the major dailies, and they didn't have a reporter there. This absence, however, was not accidental: Libya happens to be right now one of the hot spots of the confrontation between the USA



No credit

Libyan vessel blown up by US imperialist aggressors. Reagan tugs trip wires for World War III.

and the Soviet Union! It's certainly easier to be a gung-ho guerrillaist from an armchair in Rome or Paris than to express concrete solidarity with this people targeted by the anti-Soviet war drive.

Every night on Libyan television you could see demonstrations against US aggression held in Arab countries, as well as Greece, Spain and Italy -- and the absence of such rallies in the US testified only too well to the support given by liberal Democrats and most of the American left to Reagan's virulent anti-Soviet war drive. (Interestingly, one message of solidarity came from the Afghan government. One can be quite sure that Reagan's CIA-financed Islamic fundamentalist guerrillas there do not take Muslim Libya's side against the Afghan feudalists' American imperialist benefactors.) In particular, while the Libyan media featured long lists of solidarity statements, there was nothing from the US except for a brief mealy-mouthed statement from Jesse Jackson. Clearly people understood that the reporters were for the most part mouthpieces for imperialist propaganda. So the presence of an American socialist there counted for quite a bit.

Expressing the feelings of the delegation going in, one comrade said, 'On the one hand it felt extremely dangerous, frightening, not so much from the standpoint of what could happen to us in Libya, but rather from what the crazy people who run American policy these days could do. On the other hand we were conscious of the opportunity we were given of expressing directly the solidarity of our revolutionary organisation to the Libyan people against US imperialism and we felt proud of that.' Our presence attracted interest and some sympathy from the Libyan officials we spoke to. One of our guides appreciated the 'Crush the Contras! Defend Nicaragua!' badge we wore. When one of our members required hospital treatment, he received prompt attention from Libyan officials.

Popular mobilisation against imperialist attack

One of the first things we learned was that a private plane carrying journalists had been harassed and driven out of the area by the Sixth Fleet. However, at the beginning we were cautious. The bourgeois press was claiming that Qaddafi was out to kill all Westerners and had whipped the population into an anti-American frenzy. This was simply a bald-faced lie. Throughout our stay we were never assaulted, jeered at or threatened by any of the populace, even when walking through Tripoli without Libyan guides. Nor did we hear of any such incidents involving other journalists. In fact, the Libyan people were generally relaxed and eager to pose for photographs and demonstrate their pride in standing up to the American war machine.

In his 28 March speech, Qaddafi underscored this point, saying that American and other

foreigners who worked in the country were welcome guests and were to be treated as such. (Our flight in was shared by a number of Scottish technicians working in the oil-fields.) In fact, it was Reagan himself who sought to order Americans out of Libya in clear violation of US law. The journalists in Tripoli were those who generally covered the Middle East -- many had been to Libya before. One American correspondent who had previously interviewed Qaddafi said, 'But of course he always draws a distinction between the American government and the people.' This, however, did not prevent the bourgeois press from launching its endless scare stories about Libyans being trained as 'human bombs' to launch themselves at Americans etc.

While we were in Tripoli we attended two mass rallies. But these were hardly the only rallies that took place during this time. On television every day there were reports and film footage from other cities such as Benghazi. On one occasion a comrade walking in Tripoli came upon a rally that the reporters had not been informed of -- you never knew where something might break. There was clearly a mobilisation of a population prepared to defend their country. Wall posters and slogans, mainly in Arabic but some in English, were prominent throughout the city -- not only around the airport and the Al Kabir Hotel frequented by journalists. One popular placard depicted a big green fist (stylised after Qaddafi's 'Green Revolution') smashing a US aircraft carrier. Reagan was portrayed as a Dracula in several posters. Under one of these was the slogan in English: 'The Evil Doers -- the unkempt barbarian is a necrophiliac (obsessed with death) because his approach suffocates humans.'

Despite the real concern over the US provocations, there was no frenzy or hysteria in Tripoli. Shops, schools and businesses were open as usual. There was no curfew and the visible police presence was low key. In the parking lot across from the hotel soccer games were being played. There were motorcades that occasionally came by the hotel at night with horns tooting and militants shouting slogans, and the evening prior to the big demonstration there was a fireworks display set off near the hotel. One journalist we spoke to aptly characterised the general atti-



Workers Hammer

Tripoli, 28 March: Libyan youth mobilised against imperialist aggression.

tude of the people as contempt for Reagan. Reagan had threatened to teach the Libyans a bloody lesson and there wasn't much to show for it. Despite the bombastic threats of the US warlords and the anger at losses suffered by the Libyan people, they clearly did not perceive themselves as defeated or humiliated.

When we arrived, the Western press was boasting of a huge victory for Reagan: four Libyan naval vessels sunk, the SAM-5 missile site at Sirte wiped out, and no American losses. The Libyan government conceded that

continued on page 4

Libya...

(Continued from page 3)

one of its ships was sunk while saying that they had shot down three F-14s; they also accused the US of vindictively sinking a fishing boat and a trawler attempting to rescue Libyan sailors. While we were obviously not in a position to verify the military claims, we did note how the Pentagon's stories kept changing. While still in Tripoli we were informed that they now claimed only two Libyan boats. Qaddafi said that one of the American missiles fired at Sirte had not exploded and that he was turning it over to the Soviets. The US was then insisting that all the missiles had detonated on target. (One friendly journalist in fact told us he had seen the missile being delivered to the Soviet embassy.) After leaving Libya we noted that the bourgeois press was now admitting that the Sirte missile base was operational and offering excuses that maybe all of the American missiles didn't explode. In fact, our sense was that the American government was so paranoid about taking any losses that they chose to avoid a serious engagement with even Libya's modest forces.

Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam: defeats for US imperialism

On 28 March we attended the demonstration of upwards of 10,000 people addressed by Qaddafi at the military barracks in Tripoli. This demonstration, while part of the general mobilisation, was specifically to celebrate the sixteenth anniversary of the expulsion of British military bases from the country. There was a cross-section of youth, militarised students, a contingent of nursing students, soldiers and sailors, military bands, and representatives of various ethnic groupings including Bedouin horsemen. There was a heavy security presence, with soldiers posted on surrounding rooftops, army personnel with red and blue berets carrying Kalashnikovs and civilian militia as well. (The red berets we later learned are apparently Qaddafi's personal guard.) The crowd included large numbers of women, mostly younger in green uniform (some armed) and a number in traditional veils. At the front of the barracks there were four Soviet-built tanks visible and apparently ready to operate.

Qaddafi spoke in Arabic for a little over an hour. We did recognise several times the words 'Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam'. Qaddafi is undoubtedly popular here. There were numerous placards with his picture and he was repeatedly interrupted with chants in English such as 'Down, down USA' and Arabic equivalents. A couple of times he indicated the crowd should stop, without receiving immediate attention. People overall looked not too tense, talking to each other, laughing and apparently having some fun. At the end of the demonstration a cow with the tag 'Reagan' was slaughtered, accompanied by militant chanting and waving of weapons in the air.

to whom we had made available a copy of the 1st statement and our pamphlet on Reagan's Korean Airlines spy plane atrocity informed us that in fact there had been no Soviet casualties at Sirte and tipped us off that Voice of America was claiming that Qaddafi was daring the Americans to come back again. In fact, Qaddafi's speech was fairly low key and restrained (this accorded with our sense of the crowd reaction). Qaddafi had counterposed Libya's 'modest and defensive' forces to the bloody record of US imperialist aggression. He



Workers Hammer
Veiled women demonstrate against US imperialism in Tripoli. Libyan 'socialism' still means Islamic oppression for women.

correctly noted the US designs on Nicaragua as well as Reagan's fiasco in Lebanon. Jana reported: 'Trivial and ignorant Reagan, he said, should have recalled the American defeat in Vietnam and consulted figures to see the number of American casualties after which they came out defeated and Vietnam became a united powerful and respected socialist state. But America suffered a political and military defeat for which, and without justification, thousands of Americans paid with their lives for that defeat.'

The Jana news release also said: 'Colonel Muammar al Gathafi confirmed that the madness of the Nazi force made Hitler imagine he can conquer the world and turn the Soviet Union into Colonies, occupy Africa and the North Pole... Where are the empire of Alexander of Macedonia, the Ottoman empire, Hitler's empire which he wanted to build by force and on the skulls of nations? Where are the empires of Portugal, Holland and Britain?'

Libya ravaged by imperialism and colonialism

The memory of bloody imperialist rampage and spoliation is burned into the Libyan

for the population of the country. In the massive North African campaign between 1940 and 1943, some cities like Benghazi changed hands four or five times. And every time one army would retreat they would poison wells, loot, burn stores and granaries. The Australian troops were particularly notorious for their brutal treatment of Arab women. Tripoli, Benghazi, Tobruk and other cities were all sites of interminable air raids that indiscriminately incinerated civilian targets. No matter who 'won' the Libyans lost. Quite logically, the Libyan people do not make much of a distinction between the belligerents: they surely don't see in the Allied troops any kind of 'liberators'. It highlights in a stark fashion the correctness of the Trotskyists' position of revolutionary defeatism on both sides during this imperialist war.

Neither the demise of the Italian imperialist presence or the later evacuation of the British and Americans from their military bases has meant an end to the horror of this war for the Libyan people. In 1943 the German general Rommel alone laid down upwards of 150,000 mines in the area west of Sirte in a futile effort to contain a British counteroffensive. These mines were laid too late to stop the British but along with similar 'defensive lines' established by Allied troops have been responsible for killing and maiming thousands of innocent men, women and particularly children since then.

As recently as 1980 five boys from Ghadames tripped an undetonated mine -- two were killed outright, the others crippled. The Germans, Italians and British have all refused to pay reparations for their grisly handiwork in a war justly characterised by the Libyan government as a 'war that was fought on their land between people who were strangers to it and who -- after having struggled against each other for a long time -- left Libya, became reconciled and have become friends'.

The Italian comrade on the delegation told Workers Hammer: 'I was proud to go to Libya as part of a revolutionary communist delegation to express our proletarian solidarity with a country under imperialist threat. Seventy-five years ago another man bearing my name was sent by Italian imperialism to help fight a war that was not his: my grandfather was ever since a socialist and an atheist, toiling daily as a dockworker to provide a living to his wife and children, among whom was my father, who became a communist quite early and together with my mother, herself a communist, gave me my basic social and political education.'

Libya and Nicaragua: the difference is revolution

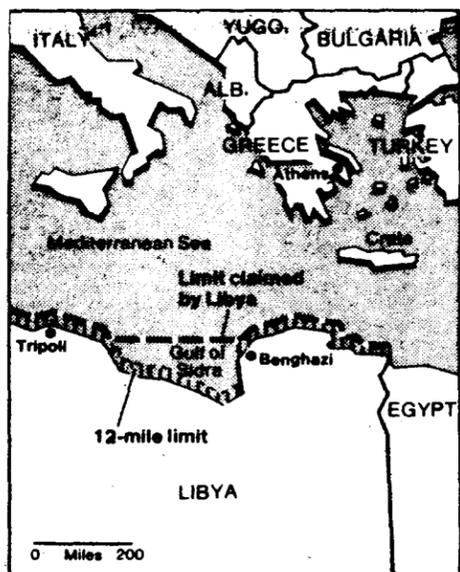
One of the comrades on the delegation had earlier been part of an 1st delegation to embattled Nicaragua. She remarked on the different perceptions of the two countries: 'Between Nicaragua and Libya there are really enormous differences, two countries on two completely different roads. When I was in Nicaragua, a very poor country, one had endless contact with the population, because there is a revolutionary situation. People were politically mobilised both against US imperialism and to build something. In Libya, while there was the same spirit of fighting against US imperialism, it is not a revolutionary situation. I was impressed by the level of development in the country -- lots of housing complexes being built, many of the poor neighbourhoods in the process of being torn down. But you can see clearly that here religion and the state go together, and it is felt particularly deeply around the woman question. You can see lots of women wearing a veil.... I noticed that most women without a veil were either young women or foreigners.'

In the course of their short stay, our comrades could only get a glimpse of the daily life of the Libyan people and of the social conditions in the country. The standard of living is higher than in many other Arab countries; the nationalisation of the oil industry in this thinly populated country in the 1970s provided an increase in social wealth. The streets are filled with cars, many of them new, and the roofs of houses are crowded with TV antennas. The one hospital we saw was modern and clean, and medical care is free for all.

On a social level, there is a quite obvious effort to mobilise the population against the US aggression, and reportedly all students, men as well as women, undergo military training. On the other hand, we noticed a great deal of enforced separation between the sexes: no cafes where men and women can mingle. Many women wear the *baracan*, the white veil typical

continued on page 11

WORKERS HAMMER



Naked provocation: US Navy ships were six miles inside Soviet waters, probing Sevastopol naval base (right). Gulf of Sidra (left), scene of US acts of war against Libya.

We were able to move about freely during this demonstration. When military personnel did not want to be photographed they indicated so firmly and politely. Weapons were shouldered quite professionally with the muzzles pointing down. There was no evidence of craziness, jumpiness or hysteria. At various points there were photographers who put their hands on soldiers to climb up or down platforms. To operate with crazy, gun-toting cops in such a fashion at a demonstration in Rome or New York would be to take your life in your hands.

The next day we obtained a translation of much of the speech from the daily Jana (Libyan news agency) bulletin. A Soviet TV journalist

masses. The Turco-Italian war of 1911, in which thousands of Arabs were butchered, was a barbaric conflict over the possession of Libya. For the first time in a war, airplanes were used -- against a population whose most advanced form of military transport was camels. It was, as Lenin called it, 'A perfected, civilized bloodbath, the massacre of Arabs with the help of the "latest" weapons' ('The end of the Italo-Turkish war', 28 September 1912). This conflict set off a 20-year resistance against Italian imperialism in which almost 6000 Libyan fighters were executed by the Italian government.

During World War II Axis and Allied troops ravaged Libya for years, without any respect

Flashpoints...

(Continued from page 1)

Hill fall into line. A revote of the contra aid bill is scheduled for 15 April, and if it passes, the Reagan administration will use it as a 'Tonkin Gulf resolution', an elastic substitute for a declaration of war, as they did in Vietnam.

US provocation in the Black Sea

In the past, whenever the US got caught out in such activities as the Black Sea provocation, it was standard operating procedure to issue a cover story protesting innocence -- ie the ships were allegedly 'lost' or otherwise had 'accidentally' intruded. But this time the Pentagon dramatically upped the ante, openly admitting that they were sent to 'test Soviet defences'! For two hours the two US spy ships sailed well inside Soviet territorial waters in the Black Sea. In an 'exercise ... ordered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the name of Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger', the guided missile cruiser *Yorktown* and the

a former high-level State Department official, reported that administration officials were saying Reagan's actions come from 'an attitude of confidence and optimism about having the Soviets on the run':

'Now, the sense is that Moscow is on the defensive and that the United States can be somewhat more venturesome in challenging Soviet interests with less risk of a serious Soviet response. Thus, there are open and strong military challenges to Soviet client states.' (New York Times, 27 March)

In other words, Reagan thinks the Soviet Union is an eight stone weakling, and he is gleefully kicking sand in Gorbachev's face.

Reagan believes that faced with relentless military pressure and an all-out arms race draining its economic resources, Russia will crack. He also believes that the US can commit endless provocations against the Soviet Union, its allies and military clients without fear of escalation (or even American casualties). This is a strategy that could touch off a thermonuclear World War III. Thus the Russians would have been entirely within their rights to blow the two spy ships off the Crimea right

advisers show up dead.' Nicaragua, he said, would shoot down US helicopters in Nicaraguan airspace or attacking from Honduran airspace, 'even if it would mean they launch North American troops into our territory'. Such an invasion 'won't be a military field trip', said Sandinista commander Omar Cabezas. 'We have 350,000 rifles distributed and a people ready.'

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, the US is desperate to counter a buildup of 'highly trained Soviet special forces', known as *spetsnaz*, who are 'turning the tide against the mujaheddin resistance' in the past year, according to the *San Francisco Examiner* (7 March). For years the CIA has supplied the fanatic Islamic 'freedom fighters' (who shoot schoolteachers for teaching young girls to read) with Soviet-made light missiles. The idea was to maintain 'plausible deniability' of direct US involvement. But supplying American-made 'Stingers' to the Afghan cutthroats, who will use them directly against the Russian army, turns a 'proxy war' into a direct US-Soviet confrontation. This major escalation has sparked opposition even within the State Department and the CIA.

Class war to stop imperialist war!

What unites liberal Democrats with Reaganite right-wingers in the US and Labour misleaders and Tories here is their bipartisan commitment to defend capitalism, and therefore to seek the destruction of the Soviet Union, whose proletarian revolution of 1917 was the first and greatest blow in liberating the workers and oppressed of the world from this war-driven imperialist system. Despite its subsequent bureaucratic degeneration under Stalin, the USSR still stands as the main obstacle to US imperialism's mad ambitions to dominate and exploit the entire world. It was fear of Soviet military power which prevented Kennedy from invading Cuba and Johnson and Nixon from nuking North Vietnam.

From one end of the spectrum to the other, the fake left goes out of its way to bury the fact that the recent US provocations against Libya ultimately target the Soviet Union. Even the supposedly pro-Soviet *Morning Star* (26 March), committed to 'detente' with the anti-Soviet Labour misleaders, refused to label it anything more than 'picking a fight with anti-imperialist Libya and maintaining world tension'. We Trotskyists have always insisted that we are the most consistent and steadfast defenders of the Soviet Union. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, coming out of the slaughterhouse of the first imperialist world war, opened the road to a future without war, social oppression and capitalist exploitation. Reagan and Thatcher's drive to war against the Soviet Union goes hand-in-hand with war against workers and minorities at home. They must be stopped! Only workers revolutions throughout the imperialist world, led by communist vanguard parties, can prevent World War III. ■



Gentile/Picture Group



Workers Vanguard

Soviet-built Mi-8 helicopters are crucial as crack Nicaraguan troops wipe up CIA-backed contras.

destroyer *Caron* went 'up to six nautical miles' inside the 12-mile coastal limit near Sevastopol in the southern Crimea (*New York Times*, 19 March).

Supposedly this naked provocation was to assert a 'right of innocent passage' through Soviet territorial waters, since the US ships weren't firing guns or launching warplanes. Some 'innocent passage'! The *Yorktown* is equipped with the computerised Aegis fire control system, and the *Caron* carries special gear to 'probe the shore surveillance and defence capabilities', including the ability to 'induce a nation to switch on shore-to-sea, ship-to-ship, and air-to-sea radar' (Jeffrey Richelson, *The U.S. Intelligence Community* [1985]). The *Caron* has previously been used for provocative spying missions in the Gulf of Fonseca, off Nicaragua, and the *New York Times* quoted Pentagon officials saying the ship 'had been loaded with additional sensors and listening devices' for this operation.

Moreover, Sevastopol is not just any port -- it is a major naval base, headquarters of the Soviets' Black Sea Fleet. In the Crimean War of 1854-55, rivers of Russian blood were shed in defending Sevastopol in an eleven-month siege against some 200,000 English, French and Turkish troops -- the war 'was distinguished by more hand to hand encounters than all the wars of Napoleon together', Engels wrote at the time ('Aspects of the War', October 1855). During World War II, the port was captured by the Nazis, but the Russian fleet escaped to continue harassing Hitler's forces. So the US Navy's intrusion into the Crimea would understandably arouse the deepest fears in the Russian people for the safety of their country.

Don't mess with the Russians!

Ever since Ronald Reagan moved into the White House, we have warned that this anti-Communist nut is driving towards war with the Soviet Union by engaging in provocations and military confrontations across the globe. The events of the past few weeks have demonstrated this so dramatically that even prominent spokesmen for American imperialism as well as various NATO allies are worried that 'Ronbo' is pushing things too far. Leslie Gelb, the *New York Times* 'national security' expert and

out of the Black Sea. And this might well have occurred. As the USSR deputy minister of defence, Fleet Admiral VN Chernavin, recounted:

'Taking into account the obviously provocative character of the American vessels' operations, the [Soviet] command sent out an order to heighten the battle preparedness of the fleet's strike forces. Ships and aircraft were immediately readied for battle duties.

'The strike forces of the fleet were prepared immediately to stop the provocative operations of the American warships in Soviet waters. But we distinctly understood the severity of the possible consequences. And this time, we showed patience and restraint.' (*Izvestia*, 23 March)

In Central America, too, the Pentagon is playing with fire. Commenting on the ominous escalation of US helicopters moving into battle zones, Nicaraguan leader Daniel Ortega warned that American personnel who supported the contras ran the same risks as those mercenary terrorists. 'I would not be surprised if tomorrow a US helicopter was shot down by our combatants or if US officials or military

Correction

In our article 'Mitterrand paves way for rightist reaction' (*Workers Hammer* no 77, March 1986) we accidentally dropped a line of copy from the text. The third paragraph should have begun 'Economic crisis and anti-immigrant terror are ravaging France.' We apologise for any confusion that may have been caused by this mistake.

Eyewitness Tripoli The Russian Question point blank



LONDON
Tuesday, 22 April, 7.30pm
Friends Meeting House
Room 7/8
Euston Road, London NW1

BIRMINGHAM
Tuesday, 29 April, 7.30pm
The Crown
Broad Street

SHEFFIELD
Wednesday, 30 April, 7.30pm
Red Deer
Pitt Street
Sheffield

Spartacist League Public Meetings

For more information: London (01) 278 2232, Birmingham (021) 236 9774, Sheffield (0742) 7379

Women and the Russian Revolution

Celebrating International Women's Day 1986



Mark Meyer

Soviet schoolgirl, ready to defend the gains of October.

Over fifty people turned out on 13 March for a London Spartacist League public meeting celebrating International Women's Day. Central Committee member Alison Pearce spoke on 'Women and the Russian Revolution', emphasising defence of the gains of October 1917 today from Poland to Afghanistan and the revolutionary lessons for the heroic coalfield women here.

A lively discussion followed when supporters of the fake-Trotskyist Banda/Slaughter Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) and the Stalinist International Leninist Workers Party intervened. The former whitewashed counterrevolutionary Solidarnosc as simply a 'spontaneous' reaction to Stalinist crimes; the latter denounced the Trotskyist perspective of political revolution. As one SL comrade pointed out, from opposite sides these two 'share a common methodology, which is first ask the Stalinist bureaucracy what their intentions are.... Our starting point is what advances the international proletarian revolution.' Whereas the 1956 Hungarian uprising clearly defended socialised property against restorationist threats, Lech Walesa's Solidarnosc looked to Reagan and Thatcher. 'That's not spontaneous; that guy learned something from somewhere and it was probably in a CIA-financed school.'

We print below an edited and abridged transcript of Comrade Pearce's presentation, along with excerpts from the floor discussion.

I went to see a film a couple of nights ago called *Letter to Brezhnev*. It's about two young women who are living in Liverpool. Their only dream or hope in life is to have a job or to escape from Liverpool. One of them falls in love with a Russian sailor, and through that she actually has the possibility of escaping to a place that she feels must be better than the hell-hole that she's living in.

learning to read and write under the protection of the Red Army, Soviet troops -- with what I had always been told about Russia including by my friends on the left.

And I don't think that you only have had to live in Liverpool to believe that film or to want to escape to get a decent life. I bet those living in the mining communities would find the film pretty believable. For example, during the strike they saw that in the Soviet Union, miners get sent on holiday to the Black Sea, whereas here, they try to throw you on the dole. You try and fight to resist that and the cops invade your community, they beat you up and then they arrest you for that. So I don't think you need me to sit here and tell you that life in Britain is pretty grim right now and it's especially so for women. What do you say about a place where teenage girls are driven to commit suicide following the Gillick ruling!

Women begin the Russian Revolution

An eyewitness to the February Revolution in Russia in 1917 commented that the Russian Revolution was begun by hungry women and children demanding bread and herring. And it's certainly true that the February Revolution was triggered by a women's demonstration on International Women's Day and it was that that led to the working class seizing power under the leadership of the Bolsheviks in the second revolution in October. Now the women at that time were demonstrating because they were absolutely fed up with their men being cannon fodder for what they saw as a senseless war. And at the same time they were starving.

If you look at the situation in Russia then, it was an extremely backward country prior to the revolution. The situation for women was appalling. The situation for the

power and to expropriate the landlords and overthrow capitalism. The Bolsheviks recognised that because working women were doubly oppressed, they would be all the fiercer in fighting for the revolution. So they had always paid special attention to work among women.

In 1913 they brought out a journal called *Rabotnitsa* which was aimed specifically at proletarian women and which played a crucial role in organising women and rallying them to the Bolshevik Party. What they were trying to do and what they succeeded in doing was building a communist women's movement which was a women's section of the proletarian party -- which didn't consist just of women but also included men -- aimed at rallying the broad masses of oppressed women to the proletarian vanguard. In 1919, they formed the Zhenotdel, Department of Working Women and Peasant Women, for communist work among non-party women. This embodied the Bolshevik principle which was outlined by Alexandra Kollontai as follows:

'Our Party does not allow a separate women's movement or any independent unions or societies of women workers, but it has never denied the efficacy of a division of labour within the Party and the setting up of such special party machines as would promise to increase the number of its members or deepen its influence among the masses.'

Lenin had said that 'the first dictatorship of the proletariat will be the pioneer in full social equality for women'. And it was. For example, it was the first government in the world to abolish the laws against abortion. As a result of that and other laws that were passed at that time -- against sexual discrimination, abolishing illegitimacy, granting women the right of divorce upon request -- women in the Soviet Union felt freer than ever before in history to take a role in society. Even within the framework of the limited resources that were available to the Bolshevik state at that time, it began to lay the material basis for freeing women from the chains of the nuclear family through the socialisation of household labour and bringing women into social production.

The Bolsheviks went out to the most backward parts of Soviet Asia. Cautiously but systematically, they undermined the reactionary institutions which enslaved women. Just to give you an example, they set up separate courts so there would be a Soviet court and an Islamic court. If the women wanted to get divorced or whatever, they could choose which court they wanted to go to. And very quickly they learned to choose the Soviet court because that was where they got justice. So great gains were made for women as a result of the 1917 revolution, many of which still remain today despite the degeneration which is due to the political counterrevolution which occurred in 1924. By the mid-1930s, under Stalin, you had the return to the idea that women's primary role in society lay in motherhood. And indeed, it will take a political revolution to restore a regime like that of Lenin and Trotsky.

But many of those gains were not reversed. In the Soviet Union today, for example, over half the doctors are women. And the majority of the legal profession in Soviet Central Asia is women. So we take the Trotskyist position that you have to defend what you've already won in order to move forward. And that it's necessary to defend militarily and unconditionally



Russian women's demonstration in 1917; banner reads, 'City guardians increase pay to soldiers' families!'

Bettman Archives Inc

I spent several years living in Liverpool and I found the film very realistic, very believable. There's a common joke in Liverpool, which is that it is a city with a lot of open space -- not parks -- but rubble where the factories used to be and the houses where people used to live. At the time I lived in Liverpool was when the Red Army intervened in Afghanistan. I wasn't a Trotskyist at the time, I was an activist in CND. But I remember that I found it very difficult to reconcile the pictures that I saw on television -- of women who'd previously been under the veil,

peasant women is pretty neatly summed up by an old proverb: 'I thought I saw two people coming, but it was only a man and his wife.' Women were seen as men's property. The husband bought his wife from the father. And for those few women who managed to escape to the cities, to join the small proletariat there, life wasn't much better.

It's no accident that the Russian Revolution happened or that it was the women's demonstration which triggered it. For years the Bolsheviks had been struggling to build a party which could lead the working class to

the Soviet Union which is still a workers state, albeit a degenerated one.

Afghan women take their liberation seriously

In Afghanistan, we saw demonstrated very powerfully how based on the gains that were made in the October Revolution, the planned economy, the Soviet bureaucracy is forced to play a progressive role in certain circumstances. What did you have in Afghanistan -- a very backward, feudal society -- a situation for women that's not dissimilar to that in prerevolutionary Russia, in peasant areas. You have Islam, the veil, the bride price. Now if you compare it to Uzbekistan which is one of the largest republics in Soviet Central Asia, you get some measure both of the achievements of the Russian Revolution and also the backwardness of Afghanistan. For example, the literacy rate in Uzbekistan amongst women is 100 per cent, in Afghanistan it's 5 per cent. In Uzbekistan, the life expectancy is 70 years, in Afghanistan it's 40.

So when the Red Army intervened in Afghanistan, we hailed them. We knew it could only mean an improvement for the life of the oppressed in a land where there are 250,000 mullahs and just 30,000 proletarians. By far and away the most oppressed were the women. There was a television documentary recently called 'Kabul Autumn', about the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. And you'd see pictures of women learning to read and write there, studying for science degrees under Soviet tutelage and protection. There's one scene in it which is a meeting of women; they're all sitting around this table and the commentator says, well, the women here take their liberation very seriously. And then the camera pans out and there's these rifles sitting in front of every one of them. And he says: 'Those Kalashnikovs are real and they're loaded.'

The other thing that film also makes clear is that there's a war going on there. For example, the teachers which they show; they tell stories about how those teachers have been attacked, tortured and really severely mutilated. There is the sound of rocket fire echoing throughout the night -- and that's the Islamic reactionary mullahs who are fighting for the return of the enslavement of women -- funded by the CIA, lauded by Reagan and Thatcher, because after all the imperialists see it as a chance to move against the Soviet Union in the Cold War drive. You only have to look at Iran to see what the situation will be like for women if the Red Army is driven out.

Solidarnosc: anti-Communist, anti-woman

Another hot spot in the Cold War is Poland, which is also a place where it is important to look at the position of women. Because there also the imperialists, spearheaded by Reagan and his closest ally Thatcher, saw a chance to return a workers state to capitalism by supporting a force for internal counter-revolution in Solidarnosc. Now Walesa showed his colours when he returned that support -- for example, calling Thatcher a 'brave and wise woman' while she was busy instigating the smashing of miners' skulls, and there was Walesa hobnobbing with the UDM. Given Solidarnosc' capitalist-restorationist programme, you'd expect them to be bad news for women anyway. And if you look at the leadership of Solidarnosc in 1981, it was a hundred men and not a single woman. We made a comment at the time that the only woman in the leadership of Solidarnosc was the Virgin of Czestochowa.

If you've seen pictures of Lech Walesa, he's never without his Madonna lapel pin. And that's a pretty serious thing for women. Abortion was made legal in Poland in 1947; now, if Solidarnosc and the Catholic church were to win their way, I don't think that would last for very long. You only have to look at the situation in southern Ireland to get some picture of what life would be like for women in a state dominated by the Catholic church. So we said, you have to stop Solidarnosc' counter-revolution! Like in the Soviet Union we fight for workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy, but that means being the best defenders of the socialised property forms -- that means a political revolution on the basis of defending what's already been gained there.

Now, recently in Britain we saw one of the most tremendous and important class struggles that we've seen this century -- and that was the heroic twelve-month strike by the miners. One of the most important developments which we saw during this struggle was the drawing together of layers in this society that are specially oppressed under capitalism -- women,

racial minorities, gays. It's pretty important that when a predominantly white sector of the working class like the miners got the same treatment from the cops that the blacks and Asians have been having for years, that that changed their attitudes; we saw that happening pretty quickly. And it became pretty obvious to them why blacks and Asians gave most readily to the strike.

And one of the very noticeable things was the role of women during the miners strike. As a subscriber of ours from the coalfields put



Workers Hammer

Coalfield women, valiant working-class fighters.

it at a dayschool which we held nearly a year ago: 'The women didn't just want to be with their men, they wanted to fight alongside them.' And they did! They organised the food kitchens and the clothes etc. They had their husbands look after the children whilst they came down to collect. But they also fought and went on the picket lines.

So now during the print strike, you get women down on the picket lines at Wapping. And one International Women's Day demonstration, a week ago in London, was organised to go down to the picket lines at Wapping. And that's because of the effect of the miners strike and the example of the role that women played there.

Fortunately Thatcher didn't succeed in her aim of smashing the union. But the strike lost. So we're bound to ask the question *why*. Another of the lessons of the Russian Revolution is the need for a revolutionary party. The miners sure were militant and they had a militant leader in Scargill, but it wasn't a revolutionary leadership. In the upshot, Scargill's answer was the Labour Party. And many miners recognised, if the fake left didn't, that this isn't enough. What did Kinnock do during the strike? He supported the call for the ballot; he denounced the so-called 'violence' of the picket lines. And it wasn't just Kinnock.

What about the 'left wing' of the Labour Party that the fake revolutionaries are always looking to? What did Tony Benn do or say? Well, I think he was more concerned with getting Kinnock into Number Ten. He wouldn't split with Kinnock over the Labour Party's role during the miners strike. And just after the strike Scargill addressed a women's rally, and he told them that now the strike's over what you have to do is go down to Greenham Common and go and campaign for a Labour government. That is, tell the women who've been down on the picket lines, taken a class stand, to go and campaign for the party which introduced virginity tests for Asian women. What's the Labour Party ever done for women!

For a communist women's movement!

So you don't have here the leadership that is going to lead to revolutionary change in Britain. What we need is a party like the Bolsheviks. That's a party that could have led the miners to victory, that would have had a revolutionary leadership inside the unions that would have tapped the desire of the workers at the base and spread the strike and not left the miners isolated. That's a leadership that would split the working-class base away from the misleadership of the Labour Party, a leadership that right now would be organising for the miners to go down to Wapping. It's a leadership that would recog-

nise the importance of women in struggles from South Africa, Nicaragua, throughout the world, to the British miners strike -- that would recognise the importance of women fighters and would weld that to the social power of the working class.

And it's that kind of party that we're in the business of building, because that's the one hope for all the oppressed in this society. Like the Bolsheviks we recognise the role women will play in that and we're seeking to mobilise it, to build a communist women's movement. And we put out a journal called *Women and Revolution*, which you should have seen on our literature table, which is the journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League/US. So what we are doing is trying to build a party that can be the vanguard of the working class and tribune of all the oppressed and lead to socialist revolution, a party in which women and all the specially oppressed have a particular interest, a particular need, because it's through that socialist revolution that we'll get women's liberation.

WRP: self-determination comes first

WRP supporter: I don't speak as a representative of the WRP, which is calling all questions into discussion -- and I don't rule out Afghanistan from that -- but I'll give you, if you like, my opinion... When you say that the right of self-determination of peoples is some sort of bourgeois-democratic demand -- Lenin himself gave to the constituent parts of the Soviet Union the right of national self-determination even to the extent that they could secede from the Soviet Union because he realised one thing, that you cannot institute socialism in any country on the bayonets of an invading army.



Workers Hammer

London, 13 March: Spartacist League celebrates International Women's Day, a proletarian holiday.

And if you try to make some sort of comparison between the invasion of Poland in the aftermath of Pilsudski's abortive attempt to invade, or between the invasion of Finland prior to the Second World War, you are in fact concocting some idea that the tribesmen of Afghanistan somehow represented a military threat to the overthrow of the Soviet Union. And if in fact you look at the discussion, particularly over the Red Army going to the gates of Warsaw after the Russian Revolution, after the intervention, there was a huge discussion in the Bolshevik Party on whether that should have been done or not, on whether they should have held off at the border of Poland and allowed the Polish working class to perhaps stage their own revolution to overthrow Pilsudski. And they realised in fact that when they did invade all they did was to create a reactionary movement, a nationalist movement around which Pilsudski could mobilise the Polish masses.

The rights of nations to self-determination is a part of the communist programme. It isn't just a bourgeois-democratic demand and you cannot institute any sort of socialist govern-

continued on page 8

International Women's Day ...

(Continued from page 7)

ment that tells other peoples in the world that we can institute the type of society we want onto you whether you like it or not... If you start out from this position that the Soviet bureaucracy knows best then you are never going to in fact be able to have any influence at all in the working class of those countries dominated by Stalinism.

And just on Solidarnosc. You're forever equating Solidarnosc with Lech Walesa. You've never in fact published a rounded analysis and quoted from resolutions that were passed



Tass

Above: young women in Kabul liberated from the veil. Right: traditional enslavement of women.

and talks about Trotskyism will be on the next plane out. And they couldn't do it under Solidarnosc.

Fred Purdy, Spartacist League: ... The point you raised has to be answered. Afghanistan is not a threat to the Soviet Union -- the United States is, Britain is even in a smaller way, France is -- countries which have nuclear weapons they can use against the Soviet Union. Obviously Afghanistan is not. But nor was Poland and Finland. 'Poor little Finland' was the war cry of Shachtman and Burnham, as well as all the social democrats and pro-imperialists before the Second World War...

Now the question of Solidarity and Lech Walesa -- you say you were there and there was freedom of discussion. Surely, what about Kronstadt in 1921? The slogan that this



AP

and letters that were sent from underground Solidarity organisations in Warsaw and in the Silesian coalfields in fact expressing support for the miners and condemning -- I don't know whether they actually condemned verbally but they implicitly -- the position of Walesa. And if you think that Solidarnosc is so thoroughgoing a counterrevolutionary movement, of course then you have a non-dialectical point of view as to the type of organisations thrown up spontaneously by the masses, and Solidarnosc is one of those. It wasn't thrown up by the church; it was thrown up by a broad mass movement against Stalinism and within that there were all sorts of positions.

I was in Poland just before the Red Army took over and you could talk about Trotskyism then. People wanted to learn about everything -- there was no holds barred -- and they didn't give a damn whether the policemen were listening. That is not the situation now. The situation now is anyone who comes in there

counterrevolutionary uprising had was for soviets without Bolsheviks. They weren't even calling for capitalist restoration or for anything which mentioned restoration; they were for soviets, *except* these soviets should not have Bolsheviks in them. And that was the key for counterrevolution there.

Now, we don't draw an equation, as you know, between the Soviet Union before 1924 and the Soviet Union now. We fight for a political revolution in the Soviet Union as well as in Poland and all the deformed workers states so that in fact a programme for the extension of the revolution throughout the whole world can be fought for... You know that in Poland in 1920, the debate inside the Bolshevik Party was not a question of principle -- it was a question of tactics. Was it smarter to intervene with the troops against Pilsudski and invade Poland or was it not a smart thing to do. Trotsky thought it was not a smart thing to do. He was right against Lenin in that case.

But it was not a question of principle, it was a question of tactics: was it preferable? The Soviet Union trained the first paratroopers in the world with a very specific aim in mind. The Communist International would organise insurrection in different places and once the fight against the bourgeois armies would reach a point where you needed some kind of more trained troops, they would send in paratroopers. We think that a Trotskyist leadership would be prepared to do so in the Soviet Union.

Jon Branche, Spartacist League: ... Let me make a point about this discussion about democracy. A very simple instance was during the miners strike where you had Thatcher raising a big hue and cry about the absence of democracy in the mineworkers union because there was no ballot. And of course as good defenders -- I hope -- of the British working class, we all know that that's nonsense. We stood with the miners against Thatcher's boloney about democracy in the labour movement. And similarly one gets the same cry from the same people that screamed about the absence of democracy in the mineworkers union about the right of 'poor little Afghanistan' to have self-determination. The real question in fact is not particularly what were the motives of the Soviet bureaucracy in going into Afghanistan; but what were the motives of Reagan and Thatcher in fomenting Reagan's 'freedom fighters' in Afghanistan which is the real question here. That's the question that we confront today.

When Trotsky wrote in fact in the period after World War I, one had the context of a number of imperialist powers who'd sent their troops into Russia. Then all of a sudden, when the Russian army went to defend itself against first the German imperialists and then the Entente in the small country of Georgia, the cry arose about 'poor little Georgia'. And in that context Lenin and Trotsky said the following:

'We do not only recognise but we also give full support to the principle of self-determination, wherever it is directed against feudal, capitalist and imperialist states. But wherever the fiction of self-determination, in the hands of the bourgeoisie becomes a weapon directed against the proletarian revolution, we have no occasion to treat this fiction differently from the other "principles" of democracy perverted by capitalism.' [Leon Trotsky, *Social Democracy and the Wars of Intervention in Russia 1918-1921*, New Park Publications]

In short, the question of national self-determination is subordinated to the general principles of the proletarian class struggle -- as it is in Afghanistan today, as it was in Finland and Poland on the eve or at the beginning of World War II, when the exact same criticisms were laid by all the imperialist powers and echoed by the social democrats throughout the world complaining about the Soviet advance into Finland and Poland. ■

Afghanistan: a glimpse of the truth

In refreshing contrast to the bulk of CIA-concocted propaganda that passes for reportage of the Afghan conflict (and is readily digested by the anti-Soviet fake left), a recent series of eyewitness articles by *Guardian* correspondent Jonathan Steele provided a glimpse of the truth about Afghanistan. In a 10 March piece entitled 'Bull about Kabul', Steele noted that 'week after week the Western world is being fed a story of mujaheddin success and Soviet discomfiture which may be far from the truth'. Here are some of Steele's observations:

* * * * *

Six years after they invaded Afghanistan and were condemned by virtually the entire international community, Soviet troops with their Afghan government allies have slowly begun to win the war.

Most of the reports received in the West over the last six years have come from journalists travelling with the rebels or from Western embassies in Kabul. It has been a mixed picture of heroism and incompetence, determination and disunity, courage and corruption, but the general tone has usually been upbeat. The Mujahedin, it is argued, have right on their side and will ultimately prevail, even though no one knows what kind of government -- reactionary, progressive, or Islamic fundamentalist -- they would put in place.

Now the Afghan government has started to

open the door again, to allow foreign reporters to see the picture from another angle. Not surprisingly, it looks very different.

After 18 days in Afghanistan, travelling to Mazar-I-Sharif in the north, to Jalalabad in the east, beyond the outskirts of Kabul, and even close to the Pakistan border, my impression is that the area of government activity has widened considerably from my previous visit four years ago.

The Mujahedin are still strong in many mountain areas, but in the more easily defended flat lands the government is showing more confidence and exerting greater authority. Although the rebels continue to mount hit-and-run attacks in every city, including Kabul, and can ambush traffic on the main roads, it is no longer enough to cripple the economy or prevent the Russians and their Afghan allies from keeping most of the major population centres under their control and pushing the security perimeter of each city gradually outwards into the villages beyond.

It is not just a question of military success. Rippling out from the city centres into the surrounding countryside there is a sense of acquiescence in, and even welcome for, the government's programme of modernisation. ('The reforms that outflank rebels', *Guardian*, 17 March)

* * * * *

'In here,' said the manager of the textile plant at Mazar-I-Sharif, as he opened a

door beside the rattling looms, 'is a literacy class.' Our visit had clearly not been announced in advance. Two rows of women in front, and five rows of men and boys behind them were busy looking at reading primers, but the teacher's place was empty.

Looking understandably flustered, she hurried in a moment later to explain the system. Workers have an hour a day in the factory's time to learn to read and write. A third of the plant's 750 workers are on the courses in shifts, and most of the classes are mixed -- men and women together.

For Mazar-I-Sharif this is a rarity -- as indeed are women factory workers. The town is one of the holiest places for Shi'ite Muslims. Its central square is dominated by the gleaming turquoise tiles and domes of the mosque and shrine of Hazrat Ali, who married the prophet Mohammad's daughter and became the fourth Imam of Islam. In pre-war days it used to be a place of pilgrimage for thousands of Muslims from Iran and Pakistan.

The Mosque's influence hangs over Mazar. Almost every woman is completely covered in a veil with a small grille-work of less closely-woven cloth in front of the eyes to allow them to see but not to be seen. The few women, who wear western clothes, are mainly government or party officials, and men and women never walk together in the street. ('How the revolution caught on', *Guardian*, 18 March)

Backsliding on 'Arab gold'

Why the cover-up, WRP?

Even as the anti-Soviet maniac in the White House was fingering the nuclear trigger with his provocation in the Gulf of Sidra, the Banda/Slaughter Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) managed to stage a public meeting in London 25 March on 'The Tasks of the Fourth International' which avoided all reference to either Reagan's insane adventure or the tasks of Trotskyists faced with escalating anti-Soviet war danger. While Cliff Slaughter and his fellow speakers blathered on (yet again) about Healy's break with 'revolutionary morality', supporters of the international Spartacist tendency were on their way to Libya as an expression of militant solidarity against US imperialist aggression.

When the 29 March *Workers Press* did take a position, it was to describe Qaddafi's Libya in glowing terms. Urging 'defence of the gains of the Libyan revolution', the article referred to the Soviet Union -- whose very real social gains are the ultimate target of imperialist war preparations -- only in the context of denouncing it for refusing to 'help the Libyan people to defend itself against imperialist aggression'. The following week's *Workers Press* (5 April) went even further, ludicrously claiming that 'the "exercises" of the Sixth Fleet can therefore be best understood as part of Reagan's efforts to push Gorbachev and Co. into a deal in which the Soviet role would be to muzzle the forces of revolution in Africa, Asia and South America!'

You would think they didn't know that Soviet personnel were under attack in the Sirte missile base, that one of the ships in the attacking task force had just come back from a provocative incursion into Soviet waters in the Black Sea, that Reagan considered Libya a 'Soviet surrogate'. The WRP's crude anti-Sovietism in the midst of a war provocation clearly aimed against the Soviet Union and its wilful substitution of uncritical political support to the Qaddafi regime for the Trotskyist stance of clearly demarcated military support should ring some bells for WRP members. Years of fulsome support by the WRP under Healy and Banda to virtually every hostile regime or movement encircling the Soviet Union finally culminated in the late 1970s in the WRP's material subordination to a host of Middle Eastern sheiks and colonels.

Six months ago, in the heat of the break with Healy, Slaughter admitted: 'This Party, through Healy, sought financial support from these bourgeois [like Saddam Hussein, Gaddafi, and Nkomo]', not just for this or that political purpose, but as a system.' Referring to the WRP's sordid denunciation of Iraqi Communists butchered by the Ba'athist regime, Slaughter added, 'The practice behind it was an unprincipled financial and political dependence on the Iraqi bourgeoisie' (*News Line*, 20 November 1985). At the Blackpool TUC in 1983 this 'system' was imported to the domestic class struggle, when the WRP set up miners' leader Arthur Scargill for an anti-Communist witchhunt over his opposition to counterrevolutionary Polish Solidarnosc.

But to hear Slaughter and Co speaking at the London public meeting, you would think



Vanessa Redgrave, Michael Banda and the Qaddafi connection. Why is Banda/Slaughter WRP now backtracking?

Healy's greatest crime was a 'revision of Marxist theory'. The following evening in Cardiff, WRP veteran Bill Hunter dismissed International Committee control commission allegations made public in last month's *Workers Hammer* that the WRP had received well over £1 million for services rendered: 'most was not gifts, it was payments for printing and films'. Most recently, when Spartacist supporters raised this question again at a London WRP class on Permanent Revolution, WRP spokesman Tom Kemp replied with the same cover-up. Who are they kidding? As a Spartacist speaker at the Cardiff meeting replied to Hunter, 'You don't get nothing for nothing!'

Know nothing, learn nothing?

Less than six months after the break with Healy, we see the 'new' WRP leadership backtracking on the very issue which signified the Healy/Banda gang's departure from the workers movement. And it's deliberate. At the time of the split with American Workers League head David North over his sinister, cop-baiting 'Security and the Fourth International', the WRP leadership chose to make an issue of denying Healy had established 'mercenary relationships with reactionary and non-proletarian forces' (*Workers Press*, 8 February). Three weeks later, an editorial reply to a letter by centrist Sean Matgama shamelessly claimed, 'We do not know, for example, about alleged funding of the WRP by the Libyan authorities.' A week after that, in the 8 March *Workers Press*, Charlie Pottins' 'Comment' column went even further: 'If any Libyan money did indeed reach the Workers' Revolutionary Party or its press in the past, then I for one would have welcomed it.' Not surprisingly, this outrageous statement did not go without challenge from within the WRP itself, notably in a 15 March 'Comment' piece in reply to Pottins. Moreover, in Australia, where a pro-Banda/Slaughter faction recently split from the Northite Socialist Labour League, its new *Socialist Press* (April 1986) sharply denounces the Qaddafi connection and the Iraqi CP murders in a piece entitled 'Iraq: How the SLL betrayed'.

So what's going on? We don't know, but something stinks, and the stench should fill the nostrils of any WRP member who thought they were splitting with Healy's crimes once and for good. We do know one thing -- for all its talk about 'reexamination', the WRP leadership has avoided serious reexamination of the programmatic positions which paved the way for Healy's crimes. In Cardiff Bill Hunter explicitly defended its support to the classless 'Arab revolution' myth which prepared the subsequent fealty to Arab oil money. Likewise on Ireland, South Africa and so on, the WRP sticks by its stagist denial of Trotskyist permanent revolution.

We said last month: 'Had the Banda/

Slaughter WRP undertaken a thorough repudiation of Healy's material subordination to a host of Middle Eastern sheiks and colonels, it should have led them to reconsider their reactionary line of support to the Afghan anti-Soviet rebels as well. Likewise it would have meant a repudiation of their stab in the back to Arthur Scargill on behalf of Thatcher/MacGregor and a questioning of their support to Solidarnosc which politically paved the way to it.' In fact, for all its disavowals of having a 'programme', the WRP leadership is mainlining towards Labour-loyal fake Trotskyism and refuses to reconsider any of these positions -- all of which would raise the dreaded Russian question.

The sordid Blackpool affair

When it comes to the squalid Blackpool affair, WRP speakers at meeting after meeting have refused to disown Healy/Banda's scab services for the 'new realist' TUC right wing, though *Workers Press* has studiously evaded any comment on it until a recent letter by one Carmel Dersch. Dismissing the WRP's responsibility in fuelling Fleet Street's anti-Scargill witchhunt just months before the miners strike, Dersch claims: 'The fact that the capitalist press took this up was not the responsibility of our paper' (*Workers Press*, 15 March). Oh no? Let's quote no less an authority than arch-witchhunter (Lord) Frank Chapple, who enthuses over the WRP's coup: 'The Trots took full advantage of him by dropping their bombshell story in the middle of TUC week. It came on top of his one-sided Moscow speech, blaming Margaret Thatcher and



Frank Chapple and Len Murray at 1983 Blackpool TUC; WRP's pro-Solidarnosc attack on Scargill fuelled Cold War witchhunt.

Reagan for being the main threat to world peace' (*Sparks Fly*). *News Line* waited fully seven weeks before publishing Scargill's letter denouncing Solidarnosc just as he was being pilloried by the Cold War 'new realists' for his opposition to anti-Sovietism. And now we're supposed to believe it was all an innocent coincidence!

There was a time (for example in the 1961 'World Prospect for Socialism' document) when people like Slaughter and Kemp knew the difference between pro-imperialist anti-Sovietism and proletarian anti-Stalinism, between military support to neocolonial countries against imperialism and political support (not to mention material subordination) to bourgeois-nationalist dictators, between Labour-loyalism and Trotskyism. Those WRP members who went through the traumatic break with Healy because they wanted to be Bolsheviks had better not let themselves be lulled to sleep by the soporific fare offered up at WRP meetings. You're being led down a slippery slope, comrades. ■

CONTACT THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE:
 BIRMINGHAM(021) 236 9774
 LONDON(01) 278 2232
 SHEFFIELD(0742) 587282

The Road from the SWP to Trotskyism ... page 2
 The Faces of Economism ... page 24

SPARTACIST

The SWP and the Fourth International, 1946-54
Genesis of Pabloism

30p

SPARTACIST

HEALYISM IMPLODES

With Documents and Interviews on the WRP's Buried History 75p

The Case of Bala Tampoe
 Suppressed Documents Expose United Secretariat PAGE 17

Make payable/post to: Spartacist Publications,
 PO Box 185, London WC1H 8JE.

Wapping ...

(Continued from page 12)

class has reason to be apprehensive: Tory 'law and order' is indeed brittle these days, and the sooner effective mass pickets and blacking are mobilised, the more likely it will be the cops and scabs who suffer from 'broken heads' and not the workers. You can't win by Labour's rules! Blockade Murdoch -- mobilise throughout the print, among TGWU lorry drivers, London Transport, dockworkers, miners to march on Wapping to *shut it down tight!* Instead of Ron Todd sending out letters against scabbing, how about sending a couple of thousand militant lorry drivers down to Wapping to hand-deliver them. Picket lines mean nothing goes in and nothing comes out -- and a few dozen 'stalled' lorries outside the gates can see to it! Black all distribution! Victory to the News International strike!

For effective mass pickets — shut down Wapping!

When thousands of spirited International Women's Day demonstrators (including contingents of battle-hardened coalfield women) marched to Wapping on 8 March, Brenda Dean diverted them from picketing to a ... Vera Lynn sing-song. Even more graphic was the 15 March picket. Cries of 'Scab! Scab! Scab!' erupted from the 7-8000 angry marchers as they stopped before an iron spike fence separating them from Murdoch's car park filled with scab lorries. In an instant, a dozen or more pickets leapt forward and brought the fence down, so that there was nothing -- no fence, no cops -- between the massed demonstrators and the scab lorries. At this point the SOGAT stewards moved in to pull the crowd back. As one fuming miner who'd been at Saltley Gates said afterwards to a *Workers Hammer* seller, they'd expected the crowd to pour through and 'beat the shit out of the scabs' only to turn around and find SOGAT 'drinking tea and eating biscuits'.

The few minutes' respite provided by the SOGAT officials was enough to allow the cops to regroup, and move in on horseback with tear gas. Even then enraged demonstrators, trying to push iron barricades in front of the police horses, were warned off and told to move on by SOGAT loudspeakers. 'Move on?' shouted one marching woman, 'What's he want us to move on for?' The picketers paid for this treachery with over 25 arrests, as the cops moved in repeatedly with flying wedges, snatch squads and mounted charges. What should and *could* have happened was an invasion of strikers to clear out the scabs, occupy the plant and hold to ransom Murdoch's expensive 'new technology'.

Don't play by Kinnock's rules!

It is not only the trade union bureaucrats who kowtow to Kinnock by opposing mass pickets. Both the Stalinist *Morning Star* and the fake-Trotskyist Banda/Slaughter Workers Revolutionary Party likewise dismiss them as a central tactic in this struggle. The reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) does at least call for militant picketing, but refuses to fight for it where it has supporters in the unions. This is no accident. In line with its Cold War 'downturn' equivalent of Norm Willis' 'new realism', the SWP argues that *the strike has already lost*. Thus SWP guru Tony Cliff says in the April *Socialist Worker Review*: 'Up to now the workers have lost individual battles. Steel in 1980, hospitals and ASLEF in 1982, the NGA in 1983, the miners in 1984-5, now even worse Wapping in 1986.' So while SWP supporters get their heads busted down at Wapping, Tony Cliff assures them that it's all in vain. And what 'downturn' meant during the miners strike was SWP steelworkers crossing miners' picket lines!

Yet the centrist Workers Power (WP) group manages to attack the SWP *from the right*. According to the April *Workers Power*: 'On March 15th, the police at Wapping were caught off guard and lost control of the situation -- for about ten minutes. They could reorganise and regain the initiative but the pickets could not take advantage of their initial success in breaking their lines....' 'More importantly, even a well organised and defended picket at Wapping could not be sustained long enough to drive Murdoch to defeat.... From the start *Workers Power* has argued that spreading the strike to the whole of Fleet Street was the single most important weapon the unions could bring into play.'

Even *Socialist Worker* (22 March) pointed to the bureaucrats' role in *disorganising* the 15 March picket -- not so WP! These tactic-mongers for

all seasons are prepared to raise all sorts of slogans only to provide a 'left' cover-up for the bureaucracy, in short, only to avoid the necessary *struggle for leadership*. Of course militants must be prepared to spread the strike as necessary. But if you can't sustain effective pickets at one site, how does WP propose to shut down all of Fleet Street -- by Norm Willis crooking his finger? Apparently so. Wedded to the TUC rulebook and the Labour Party constitution, WP not only begs the TUC to 'expel the EETPU', but even says: 'Unions like the T&G which are effectively condoning the whole scab operation by tolerating their members at TNT transporting the papers, should also be disciplined.' So Norm Willis is supposed to give Ron Todd a slap on the wrist for scabherding! WP will call for *anything* -- except shut down Wapping!

More so even than usual, victory or defeat in this critical strike hinges on the question of leadership. Now is the time to organise elected joint strike committees to counter bureaucratic sabotage, and for militants to fight within such committees for an effective class-struggle strategy centred on mass pickets and blacking action. Such committees can lay the basis for industrial unity in struggle, pointing the way forward to one single industrial union throughout the print industry. But that necessarily means a political struggle against the Labourite misleaders who place parliamentary seats at a higher premium than workers' jobs. Forward to a revolutionary workers party! For mass pickets to shut down Murdoch -- TGWU members, miners, printworkers to Wapping! Victory to the News International strike! ■

Spartacist League/US sues union-busting slanderer Murdoch's vile filth

Every decent trade unionist in Britain hates Rupert Murdoch for the vicious union-buster he is. Murdoch's international empire is also notorious for churning out some of the most disgusting, right-wing gutter 'journalism' to be had. Weeks after being bought out by Murdoch's Fox Television Stations in the US, New York's Channel 5 (WNYW) broadcast a malicious and patently false slander accusing the Spartacist League/US of defacing the Austrian Consulate General in New York with red swastikas on 31 March.

Murdoch must think he's god. This bully-boy thinks he can get away with everything from slandering Marxists to stealing workers' jobs to smashing trade unions. Let him think twice! The SL/US immediately filed a libel lawsuit against Murdoch's Fox Television Stations for more than \$1 million. The 2 April libel complaint demanded \$500,000 compensation to the SL for damage caused to 'its good name, reputation, character, and standing as a Marxist political organization; its members branded as vandals, criminals, provocateurs and terrorists and as some sort of Nazis', and another \$500,000 as exemplary damages.

In recent years, the SL/US has established a widespread reputation as champions of united-front trade union/minority mobilisation to smash fascist terror, most notably as initiators of the 5000-strong Labor/Black Mobilization which stopped the Ku Klux Klan from marching through the streets of Washington DC on 27 November 1982. A letter, dated 7 April, from the SL/US to the Austrian Consulate General formally denying Murdoch's accusation as 'categorically false' noted:

'The broadcast was made without any investigation and without checking with the Spartacist League or Channel 5's own files which contain extensive material from the Spartacist League's 1985 New York City mayoral election campaign. Any investigation would have disclosed that the Spartacist League does not and would not paint swastikas on the consulate of a foreign government.

'In fact, during the past year, the Spartacist League office in New York has been the target of a campaign of criminal vandalism in the form of defacement with various offensive political slogans and symbols, including a swastika carved into the door.'

The SL, the letter concluded, 'wonders who and why would anyone attribute such an action to us'.

Murdoch's contempt for the truth is rivalled only by his contempt for the livelihoods of the workers he considers his slaves. For the information of our readers, and particularly News International strikers, we reprint below a 5 April SL/US press release.

The Spartacist League has served a libel lawsuit complaint against the owners of WNYW-TV, New York's Channel 5, and the producer of the station's '10 O'Clock News', demanding \$1,005,000 in damages. The suit charges WNYW-TV with falsely attributing to the SL the painting of swastikas on the door of the Austrian Consulate General in New York City March 31. The SL categorically denied that it or any of its members was involved in, nor did it urge others to initiate or participate in the

reported events. Further, the suit charges that the defamatory broadcast sets up the Spartacist League as a target for police repression and right-wing violence.

In its million-dollar suit, the SL noted that the Channel 5 newscast 'falsely, recklessly, negligently and maliciously' defamed the SL in its report of the defacing of the Austrian consulate. According to the 10 O'Clock News, a 'caller claimed it was the work of a left-wing group, the Spartacist League'. The newscast's false statements and the images of swastikas, prominently and repeatedly displayed, are a lethal doublewhammy, portraying the SL as terrorist crazies who go around vandalizing the property of a foreign government, and simultaneously trying to tar us with the brush of fascism, equating our Marxist political organization with the hated swastika, symbol of anti-Semitic terror and genocide.

These false and defamatory statements and implications, the suit charged, have the effect of discrediting the Spartacist League, with 'its members branded as vandals, criminals, provocateurs and terrorists and as some sort of Nazis, and characterized as criminals outside First Amendment protections, all causing the SL and its members to be isolated, stigmatized and targeted for law enforcement and/or extreme right-wing surveillance, harassment, prosecution and violence'.

Channel 5 'grossly departed from usual and normal standards of journalism', the SL suit charges. The station made no effort to check with the Spartacist League as to the veracity of the claim of the anonymous 'caller'. In fact, the next day a man was arrested and charged with attempted criminal mischief as he was preparing to throw cow's blood, eggs and potatoes at the consulate. Nor, evidently, did Channel 5 bother to check its own files concerning the Spartacist League, where they would have found extensive material from the Spartacist NYC election campaign last fall, amply documenting our Marxist politics.

Marjorie Stamberg, 1985 Spartacist candidate for mayor, said, 'It is no accident that this display of gutter journalism comes just a few weeks after Channel 5 was bought by Fox Television Stations, owned by Rupert Murdoch, who also owns the *New York Post*.' Murdoch, the Australian-born press baron, is a notorious union-buster currently seeking to destroy the British newspaper unions. Five thousand striking London printers have been thrown out of their jobs by the ruthless Murdoch, whose computerized printing plant in Wapping is protected by legions of armed police and surrounded by barbed wire.

The WNYW newscast linked the swastikas at the Austrian consulate to recent accusations that 'former UN secretary general Kurt Waldheim [who] is running for president of Austria ... tried to hide a Nazi war record'. The Spartacist League's stand that fascism must be fought by *mass working class action* is well documented in our election material. We noted that Reagan went to Bitburg to bury the memory of the Nazi holocaust and prepare for war on the Soviet Union, and that this war drive had led to a rise in racist terror at home. The Spartacist campaign declared:

'To make the streets safe for decent New Yorkers, the Spartacist Party calls for labor/black defense against the racist terrorists in white sheets and blue uniforms.' ■

Libya...

(Continued from page 4)

of the area, which is less strict than the Iranian *chador* in that the face may be uncovered; anyhow drinks and pork cannot be consumed anywhere. (One French businessman told us you could get a bottle of whisky on the black market for £150!)

As we were leaving, the government announced that it was closing down the English and French departments at Al Fateh University in Tripoli and English and French language books were burned. This was courageously resisted by some students. We also found that it was virtually impossible to find any papers or reading material in languages other than Arabic, and that even at Tripoli airport announcements were not translated into any other language. Even more disturbing were the posters we noticed as soon as we arrived at the airport, of American missiles with the Star of David painted on them, thereby identifying US imperialism with the Jewish people.

Libya thus remains a backward country which has to depend on the export of its only source of wealth, oil. And this subordination to the ups and downs of the world capitalist system -- which led last year to the expulsion of 30,000 Tunisian workers, made the scapegoats for food shortages -- cannot be overcome within the borders of a country of four million people, still suffering from the legacy of decades of imperialist exploitation. This can only be overcome through international proletarian revolution to open up the perspective of worldwide socialist economic planning. In particular, it is the duty of the proletariat of the advanced capitalist countries to militantly struggle against its own bourgeoisie's attempt to re-enslave the semicolonial peoples and restore capitalism to the deformed workers states. The position of revolutionary communists towards Libya under imperialist guns today is akin to that expressed by Leon Trotsky, co-founder with Lenin of the Soviet Union, in relation to Mexico in 1938 at a time of acute hostility and threats from Britain and the US over the Mexican government's nationalisation of its oil fields. Trotsky wrote:

'The international proletariat has no reason to identify its program with the program of the Mexican government. Revolutionists have no need of changing color, adapting themselves, and rendering flattery in the manner of the GPU school of courtiers, who in a moment of danger will sell out and betray the weaker side. Without giving up its own identity, every honest working class organization of the entire world, and first of all in Great Britain, is duty-bound to take an irreconcilable position against the imperialist robbers, their diplomacy, their press, and their fascist hirelings.' ('Mexico and British Imperialism,' 5 June 1938 [Writings 1937-38])

In a statement delivered to Libyan officials on departure, we made very clear the political context of our trip and our aims:

'The terrorist actions of the US imperialists against Libya are part and parcel of the war preparations of the USA and NATO forces against the Soviet Union, Nicaragua, Cuba, Afghanistan, Poland, and any other country that is perceived as an obstacle to imperialist domination.'

In leaving Tripoli, we pledged to 'undertake every effort to propagandize the need for the world working class to take the side of Libya against US imperialism'.

The war drive of Reagan, Thatcher and Co

is aimed at restoring untrammelled imperialist domination all over the world, by 'rolling back' the expropriation of capitalism in the degenerated and deformed workers states and reestablishing in full their sway over the former colonial subjects. In their mad pursuit of this counterrevolutionary end they are quite ready to blow the world apart. We must stop them! Workers of the world, unite to smash the capitalist system! Open the road to a peaceful, free world where every human being can enjoy life! ■

Kinnock...

(Continued from page 12)

-- ie unity with Kinnock -- above all other considerations.

The 'Militant menace' of Fleet Street mythology is in reality neither militant nor terribly menacing -- Militant truly belongs inside the Labour Party. Militant's Liverpool councillors acted as 'socialist' enforcers of capitalist oppression. Rather than mobilise the Merseyside labour movement and oppressed to spearhead a class fight against Thatcher, Militant managed to turn the city's sizeable black population against them and hand out 31,000 redundancy notices to boot. Over the



Times

Neil Kinnock wants 'Militants' expelled as proof of Labour's capacity to form next bosses' government.

years, they have been consistent 'left' frontmen for the Labour traitors: from advising Malvest to defeat Argentina in the Falklands/Malvinas to concocting 'socialist' excuses for the imperialist army's presence in Northern Ireland. True to form, Militant's campaign against Kinnock's expulsion threat consists of one court suit after another, their 'mass mobilisation' centring on the High Court bench.

Like the organically Labourite Militant, the rest of the fake-revolutionary left views the idea of any sort of split in the Labour Party with horror, and not just the groups buried inside. The nominally 'anti-Labour' Socialist Workers Party is currently in hot pursuit of Militant. The Banda/Slaughter Workers Revolutionary Party -- whose antecedents in the early 1960s carried out a significant, principled split centred in the Labour Party youth -- backs Militant without criticism. And the centrist Workers Power (WP) offers up its usual barrage of rhetorical confusion and left-sounding criticism only to fall into step behind the rest. Under the watchword, 'Unity against Kinnock', Workers Power (April 1986) urges all and sundry to 'unite and fight Kinnock as part of the fight to build this revolutionary party'. And how?

'We should also ask the Campaign Group MPs and the left union leaders to launch a campaign at least as vigorous as Tony Benn's deputy leadership campaign was... 'The left should fight together for resolutions to block Kinnock's attempts to base Labour's election on incomes policy and the scuttling of all progressive conference decisions....'

At bottom, WP (like Militant) seems to think the Labour Party can be organically transformed into a revolutionary party -- because what it offers with this stale rehash of 'make the lefts fight' is a political bloc with, and around the policies of, the Labour 'lefts'. Trotsky devoted numerous articles in the 1920s demonstrating how the 'lefts' acted

as the transmission belt between the most militant workers and the treacherous Labour chiefs. And especially since the miners strike, which saw the scabherding right wing widely discredited in the working class, the so-called Labour 'left' has been the key instrument for keeping militant workers in Kinnock's fold. Yet it is through unity with these spineless gentlemen of the 'left' that the equally spineless Workers Power proposes to build ... a revolutionary party!

Trotskyists understand that a revolutionary party can only be built by splitting Labour's working-class base away from the reformist misleaders, right and 'left'. Instead of the same old cycle of 'progressive policies' in opposition and capitalist oppression in office, workers and the oppressed need a new leadership, a revolutionary vanguard party to smash the bosses' system of exploitation and misery and establish a workers government. ■

Workers Power...

(Continued from page 2)

ous reds' was clearly marked out when the Polish Stalinist bureaucracy checked Solidarnosc counterrevolutionary bid for power in December 1981, and WP is keenly aware that that line can never be transgressed if they're to remain part of the chummy 'left'. Fulminating against Lister, they write: 'He hopes, by linking us to the Spartacists, to score an immediate point with WRP members who, rightly, abhor an organisation that scabbed on the struggle of the Polish workers in 1980-81.' Is that clear? We, Workers Power, supported this scab outfit even after acknowledging its capitalist-restorationist nature -- unlike the rotten Spartacists who put their words into practice and defended the Polish collectivist property forms against counterrevolution.

It's true, as WP points out, that over Afghanistan in December 1979 they dropped their earlier state-capitalist (openly anti-Soviet) position in favour of a nominally Soviet-defencist line -- without of course going to such typically Spartacist 'extremes' as actually supporting the patently progressive Red Army intervention against a gang of CIA-backed feudal cutthroats. But Afghanistan was also the occasion for escalating imperialist anti-Soviet war preparations and accompanying hysteria, and WP pulled its finger away from the fire dead quick before it got burned with being 'Russia-lovers'. In the upshot, we apparently treated their half-step towards Trotskyism more seriously than they did. WP ran the other way when we proposed further programmatic clarification through joint discussion and/or debate. And when the imperialists and their lackeys started banging away furiously on the anti-Communist drum over Solidarnosc, WP made it clear where it stood.

WP shares the credo of the insular fake-Trotskyist left: hate Russia, hate the Spartacist League! But especially since the miners strike, many thousands of militant workers don't hate Russia. Many miners thought we were on to something when we called Solidarnosc the Polish Spencer union. WP, on the other hand, echoed the scabs' insistence on a 'constitutionally-prescribed' ballot even after the miners had voted to strike with their feet. And WP was so oblivious to the lessons militants had learned that after the strike, its vaunted *Red Miner* (no 2) advanced a programme for NUM militants so minimalist as to ignore the fight against racial and sexual oppression, opposition to British troops in Northern Ireland, defence of the Soviet Union, the need to split the Labour Party -- and this, after a year of sharp struggle.

Unreal, yes? In his 'Sectarianism, Centrism and the Fourth International' -- from which the WP article boxes off a quote, boxed off both physically and politically -- Leon Trotsky observed:

'Centrism is in a certain sense the polar opposite of sectarianism; it abhors precise formulas, seeks routes to reality outside of theory. But despite Stalin's famous formula, "antipodes" often turn out to be ... "twins". A formula detached from life is hollow. Living reality cannot be grasped without theory. Thus both of them, the sectarian and the centrist, depart in the end with empty hands and join together ... in their feeling of animosity toward the genuine Marxist.' (Writings 1935-36)

Empty-handed and anti-Marxist -- that's WP. Cut away the left-sounding surface crap and WP's bottom line is, 'There's nobody here but us Solidarnosc-loving, Labour-loyal, anti-Spartacist opportunists.' ■

Subscribe now!

10 issues of Workers Hammer for £2

10 issues of Workers Hammer plus 24 issues of Workers Vanguard, Marxist fortnightly of the Spartacist League/US, £6
(all above subs include Spartacist, organ of the international Spartacist tendency)

4 issues of Women & Revolution for £1.50

Name
Phone
Address

Make payable/post to: Spartacist Publications,
PO Box 185, London WC1H 8JE

Wapping: leadership is key

Mass pickets can beat Murdoch

Saturday after Saturday, thousands of printworkers and their supporters converge on Murdoch's scab plant in Wapping, face-to-face with an army of riot-trained cops. The demonstrations continue to swell dramatically in size, the cries of 'Scab! Scab! Scab!' resound ever louder through the streets of Wapping. But the two-month old struggle against Murdoch's union-busting and premeditated sacking of over 5000 printers is no closer to victory. What stands between the strikers and Murdoch's scab operation is not primarily Thatcher's thugs, but the unions' own misleaders, as the 15 March Wapping picket which succeeded in stopping the scab lorries for several hours showed only too clearly. *Class-struggle leadership is the key to victory over Murdoch!*

Intent above all on kneeling to Neil Kinnock's ambitions to glide into Downing Street come the next general election, the NGA and SOGAT leaders enforce the TUC's stab-in-the-back 'guidelines' on 'peaceful picketing', while TCWU 'left' Ron Todd refuses to mobilise effective blacking action against Murdoch's rags. Plagued by nightmares of the miners' militant tactics, grateful scabherder Kinnock 'commends' his union lackeys: 'You have demonstrated your willingness to put your trust in argument' (*Socialist Worker*, 22 March). But polite parliamentary debate never won a strike, and this cowardice has only emboldened the other Fleet Street bosses to emulate Murdoch. Kinnock-lover 'Captain Bob' Maxwell's black-mail sacking of 2500 NUJ and SOGAT members at his Scottish titles ended in the unions accepting 30 per cent redundancies. Express Newspapers threaten to close if 2500 redundancies are not accepted, while the *Daily Mail*, where 20 per cent of jobs have already been sold down the river, demands even more cuts.



Workers Hammer

Thousands of militant trade unionists itch to shut down Murdoch's scab operation at Wapping, but trade union officials hold back the struggle to please scabherder Neil Kinnock.

Having shoved through one extortionate deal after another, Tony Dubbins and Brenda Dean now angle desperately for a deal with Murdoch, who wants to smash trade unionism altogether, offering up jobs in exchange for 'compensation payments'.

But the ranks know their backs are up against the wall -- there is no compensation

for a job lost in this country today! The up-market bourgeois *Guardian* (22 March), itself preparing to 'do a Murdoch', apprehensively noted: 'Wapping is a major riot waiting to happen and the longer the dispute drags on the more likely it is to end in tears, broken heads and many burning lorries.' The ruling

continued on page 10

'Militant' runs to bosses' courts

Egg on Kinnock's face

Neil Kinnock wants to be Maggie Thatcher's successor, and he's showing it in every way he can. With Thatcher lashing out at the largely working-class and minority inner-city populations, surcharging local councillors who defied her over rate-capping and abolishing elected local councils, in steps Kinnock with a 'star chamber' expulsion move against twelve Liverpool Militant councillors. The 26 March Labour National Executive Committee 'disciplinary hearings' intended to use, illegally, evidence given in confidence by the Militant supporters while keeping the charges secret from them. But when seven Labour 'lefts' on the NEC staged a walkout, the meeting was rendered inquorate -- and Kinnock was left with egg on his face.

But the reformist Militant's 'defence' against the witchhunt in fact constitutes an attack on the labour movement as a whole. In-

stead of seeking to mobilise working-class and minority militants against Kinnock, the unprincipled scoundrels of the Militant tendency have repeatedly crossed the class line to take the Labour Party to the bosses' court to overturn the expulsions. We say: Keep the capitalist courts out of the labour movement! Defeat the witchhunt! No to anti-left bans and exclusions in the Labour Party!

Defeat the witchhunt!

Kinnock is gunning for the milquetoast 'Militants' for the same reason he railed against the NUM during and after the miners strike: to show the bosses that, under his stewardship, Labour can be a 'responsible' capitalist alternative to the Tories. To the bosses, expulsion of Militant is seen as a demonstration of Labour's willingness to purge

'extremism' -- ie those elements out of step with the dictates of Cold War. And Kinnock's aim is to convince not just the bosses here but in Washington DC.

The Militant witchhunt, atop much else, is intended to demonstrate commitment to Cold War austerity -- to attacking the workers and oppressed at home and supporting the NATO anti-Soviet war drive abroad. The whole process is increasingly blatant and open. Witness a 30 March *Observer* article reporting that, 'The Reagan Administration has given private assurances to Labour leader Neil Kinnock that it will not intervene in the next British general election to denounce the party's non-nuclear defence policy.' Kinnock's Labour Party promises only a repeat of the anti-working-class Wilson/Callaghan governments, only worse.

Kinnock's fiasco in the NEC underscored the continuing, deep-going divisions in the Labour Party between NATO-loyalists and a Little England 'left' out of step with the dictates of the Cold War. Were Militant, with its vaunted 8000 supporters, not as squeamishly reformist and parliamentarist as it is, it could likely have ripped a big chunk out of the Labour Party in the present period. But just like the mainstream Labour 'lefts' like Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner, Militant puts Labour 'unity'

continued on page 11