



Strikes, NHS crisis rattle bosses

Britain needs workers revolution

In the hottest outpouring of class struggle since the year-long miners battle, car workers, nurses, seamen, teachers, TV technicians and other trade unionists have hit the picket line. A *Times* (11 February) headline blared: "A million in industrial disputes", ranging from full-scale strike action to overtime bans to "working without enthusiasm". Defying their sellout misleaders, the workers are giving Thatcher and her labour lieutenants a taste of working-class struggle. As the battles spread, the Bank of England jacked up interest rates in the hope that longer-dole queues would chill the economy and dampen militancy, while the bourgeois press openly speculated that Britain was headed for another "winter of discontent" like the one in 1978-79 that toppled Callaghan's government.

Over the last two decades, one question has dominated the perspectives of the bourgeoisie – how to defeat and hamstring Britain's combative unions. Successive Labour and Tory governments have risen and fallen on this question. The last Labour government utilised the trade union bureaucracy to impose wage controls; when that didn't work, it called out the troops against striking firemen and ambulance drivers. The Tories have sought to demoralise the working class through mass unemployment and overt union-busting. This was clearly the object of Thatcher's brutal and vindictive attack on the miners, followed by the smashing of the print unions at Wapping. Trade union membership took a nosedive, from 51 per cent to 37 per cent of the workforce. For all that, the unions suffered set-backs but have not been ground down to the level of 1927, after the smashing of the General Strike.

Today's strike wave testifies to that fact. When Ford workers defied their union leaders and forced a strike, the bosses were clearly rattled. The *Financial Times* (6 February), mouthpiece for the City's banking interests, editorialised that the country seems to be "suffering a renewed attack of the supposedly conquered British disease" – ie, militant unionism. The unions had the company over the barrel: within days Ford was forced to lay off employees in its Belgian, Spanish and German plants dependent on British parts. The bureaucrats caved in, settling for a



Independent

Strike wave hits Thatcher's Britain: pickets at Land Rover warm up for confrontation with bosses (left); embattled nurses protest in London, 5 March.



Workers Hammer

**Break with the Labour traitors –
build a Bolshevik party!**

shorter contract but one that was not significantly different from the one that the union had struck against. Still workers throughout Britain noted that Ford had been forced to eat its "three final offers", vindicating the use of the strike weapon. As Ford workers were returning to their jobs, Land Rover workers struck for their own pay claim, surrounding the Rover's plant in Birmingham with 1000 pickets.

At the same time, angry nurses, fed up with obscenely low pay scales and impossible working conditions, have been staging one-day "protest actions" throughout Britain. This intersects widespread outrage at Thatcher's piecemeal privatisation and cutbacks in the already devastated National Health Service. On 24 February some 70,000 nurses and other NHS workers staged a one-day strike in Scotland. Then on 5 March up to 100,000 unionists – health workers, railwaymen, transport workers and many others – marched for four hours through London. Heckled throughout by militant nurses, sell-out TUC chief Norman Willis peddled the Labour Party line that such

Saturday marches can pressure Thatcher to shell out a few more shillings to the NHS.

The current wave of industrial actions against Thatcherite austerity, wage-slashing and union-busting poses the necessity for *political* struggle within the trade unions against Labourism. As the miners strike demonstrated, even the most "militant" trade union leaders like Arthur Scargill – tied as they are to the Labour Party – cannot provide a strategy to lead the working class to

victory in crucial class battles against the bosses and the state. In order to smash Thatcher's anti-working-class offensive the stranglehold of the Labour lieutenants of capital must be shattered, the base split from the pro-capitalist tops. That requires the forging of a revolutionary party of the proletariat dedicated to the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of workers rule.

MILITANT ECONOMISM

The current round of strikes has been shaped by the miners strike and its aftermath. Having treacherously knifed the strike, the Labour/TUC hacks attempted to suppress any social struggle so as not to embarrass the electoral chances of that gutless

continued on page 8

LTF, Tribune Communiste fuse

**Revolutionary
regroupment in France**

SEE PAGE FOUR

Victory for international labour defence

Salvadoran union leader Humberto Centeno free!

Workers Hammer prints below the press release from the Partisan Defense Committee (PDC) concerning the release of Humberto Centeno, a trade union leader in El Salvador. The PDC, a non-sectarian, class-struggle legal defence organisation in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League/US, issued this statement on 12 March.

We have learned from San Salvador that at 11:30 a.m. today trade-union leader Humberto Centeno was released by the notorious Treasury Police to the National Unity of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS). His union brothers are now protecting Centeno in the Diagnostic Center hospital where he remains in stable but serious condition as a result of the brutal beating he received during his arrest on Thursday evening, March 10.

In response to the vicious assault on Centeno, Salvadoran workers mobilized in militant protest. There was also an immediate outcry of protest internationally, expressing the revulsion of working people and others who are fed up with the terror regime

which has piled up mountains of corpses of their class brothers and sisters in El Salvador.

The Partisan Defense Committee holds the Salvadoran government of President Jose Napoleon Duarte and his U.S. government godfathers responsible for this atrocity. We hail the freeing of Centeno as a signal victory for international labor defence, while calling for continued vigilance against the death squads in and out of uniform.

Humberto Centeno is a leader of the UNTS, the principal labor federation of the country, and general secretary of the Association of Telecommunications Workers of El Salvador (ASTTEL). He and his family have suffered beyond measure from the bloody Duarte torture regime: in November 1985, his two sons Jose and Jaime were kidnapped, tortured and jailed for two years.

In the Thursday attack Centeno was traveling with an American delegation to the Ministry of Labor where union representatives were surrounded by several hundred government soldiers. The bus was stopped by Air

Force troops, Centeno was singled out and repeatedly kicked and punched, receiving numerous blows to the head and neck, thrown onto the floor of a truck and driven off. Troops forced the other unionists back into the bus, and then fired their weapons, wounding four.

Upon learning of Centeno's arrest the Partisan Defense Committee mounted an emergency international protest campaign. The PDC issued a statement demanding his immediate release, declaring:

"The utterly legitimate social struggles by phone workers and other unions are the source of social betterment for El Salvador. The attack against the workers leader Humberto Centeno raises the lunar vista of gullies full of victims of the dead squad.... In this land where murder has begotten murder, instead of killing these leaders, as has been done to hundreds of Salvadoran workers leaders before them, as well as the Archbishop Romero, listen to the voices of the exploited and oppressed."

A PDC delegation went to the Salvadoran consulate in New York with the protest, which was also delivered to the San Francisco consulate and Salvadoran embassy in Washington, and telegraphed to President Duarte and the American Embassy in San Salvador.

The New York delegation included present and former telephone unionists and a spokesman for the Spartacist League. The Partisan Defense Committee is a class-struggle legal defense organization in accordance with the political views of the SL. The PDC also alerted trade unionists, parliamentarians, human rights organizations and others in Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Australia.

Across the U.S. there were protests. The Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CIS-PES) called demonstrations in New York, Washington and San Francisco. SF mayor Art Agnos called the Salvadoran consulate on behalf of Centeno. The ASTTEL Support Project of the New York Area Labor Committee in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador mobilized union officials to send telegrams. Together with the Salvadoran Labor Defense Network in the Bay Area they are putting together a full-page ad to be published in a San Salvador newspaper, signed by several hundred American trade-unionists, protesting anti-labor repression.

The PDC called unions in Boston, Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia and San Francisco. Telephone workers were among the first to respond. In San Francisco, officials of Communications Workers of America participated in the protest outside the Salvadoran consulate and signed a telegram along with 17 members of CWA locals in SF and Oakland. CWA union officials in New York and Cleveland also sent protests.



Humberto Centeno

no credit

Dozens of local union leaders of the postal workers, auto workers, oil workers, municipal workers, machinists and teachers told the PDC they would send off protests immediately. Mike Olszanski, president of Steel Workers Local 1010, fired off a telegram to Duarte "on behalf of our 11,000 members."

The outpouring of condemnation was instrumental in obtaining the release of Salvadoran union leader Humberto Centeno in a single day. This is a tremendous victory for a land where thousands of trade-unionists have been gunned down and "disappeared" by the "forces of order." But the bestial anti-labor repression continues. In the past three months, three ASTTEL phone workers have been assassinated, as well as teachers, nurses and other union members.

The UNTS, which brought out 3,000 workers Friday to demand freedom for Humberto Centeno, is campaigning against the "gunpoint elections" called at the behest of the U.S. as part of its counterinsurgency war on the Salvadoran working people. Under the guns of this U.S.-sponsored terror regime, tens of thousands of workers are courageously striking against the bloody Duarte regime of IMF starvation and death squad "democracy." We pledge them our militant solidarity and support. ■



TROTSKY

Karl Marx against trade union reformism

Thatcher has been waging a one-sided class war against the British working class. Now a series of militant strikes have broken out, in which the workers are defying not only the bosses and the state, but the Labourite misleaders as well. But, as Karl Marx pointed out over a century ago, trade union struggle is not enough. The workers movement must fight to overthrow the capitalist system.



LENIN

At the same time, and quite apart from the general servitude involved in the wages system, the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these every-day struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady. They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerilla fights incessantly springing up from the never-ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economical reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!" They ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wages system!"

—Karl Marx, *Value, Price and Profit*, 1865

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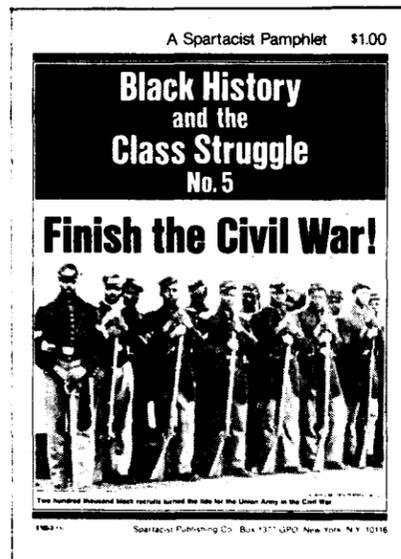
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English Workers Power, Irish Workers Group

Centrists fall out over Enniskillen

— "The Irish Workers' Group unequivocally condemns the IRA bombing at Enniskillen on November 8th." (*Class Struggle*, Dec '87 - Jan '88)

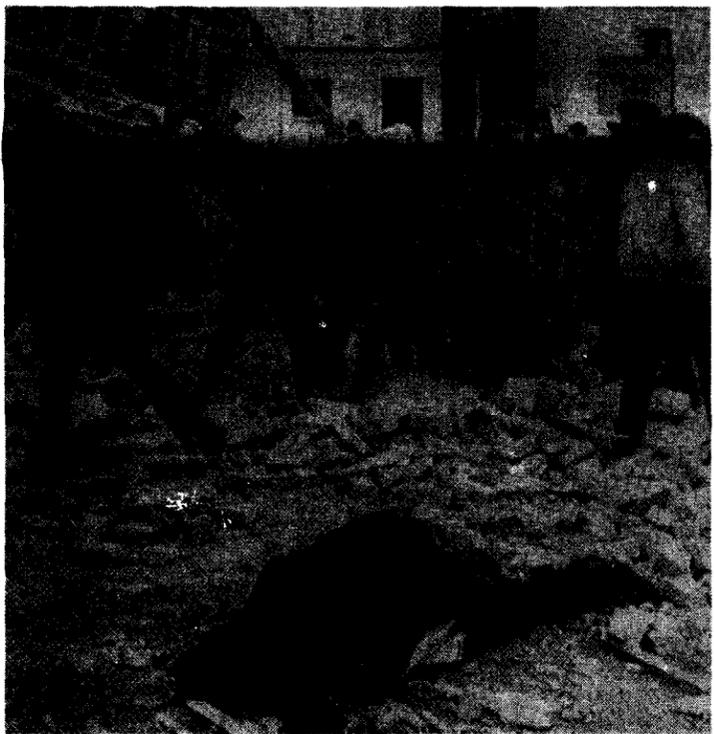
— "We defend the right of the Provisionals to struggle by any means to end Britain's rule." (*Workers Power*, December 1987)

Anybody reading the above editorial statements on the bombing at Enniskillen would probably conclude that these groupings are hostile opponents given their counterposed lines. Not so — they are "fraternal" groupings in a fake-left lash-up known as the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International. The former is the Irish section, the latter the British.

When challenged by a *Workers Hammer* salesman as to why two member groups of the same "international" had completely different positions on the Enniskillen bombing — one condemning it, the other shrugging their shoulders with a "war is hell" attitude — a London-based *Workers Power* Group member gave the standard centrist reply: There is no contradiction. Ireland is an oppressed country while Britain is the oppressor.

Enniskillen. It went badly wrong." This is petty-bourgeois, vicarious bloodthirstiness. And all the more revolting coming from *Workers Power* — "left"-talking Labourite tailists. No matter what Labour's crimes against the Irish, no matter what its crimes against the working class, no matter its crimes against minorities and women, *Workers Power* habitually calls for a vote to Labour in every election. This is standard fare for the British left. Parliamentary cretins "at home" they are "all the way with the IRA" — just across the bay. When cheerleading for Green nationalism conflicts with grovelling to Labour, the contradiction is resolved in favour of the latter. Thus, when virtually the entire left dropped the call for troops out during the hunger strikes in 1981, *Workers Power* followed suit.

The 8 November 1987 IRA bombing at Enniskillen which left eleven Protestant civilians dead was so criminal that the IRA itself was almost immediately compelled to apologise for this "tragedy" and "mistake". In its editorial condemning the bombing, the Irish Workers Group states: "... we say the Republican movement's programme is divorced



Times

Enniskillen: 'vicarious bloodthirsty "Little England" WP cheers criminal IRA bombing

In short, this means built-in capitulation: each group has responded to different pressures from within their respective countries. In the relative safety of "little England", *Workers Power* wrote what amounted to a press release for the IRA — although even the Provisionals might have found it a trifle too ambitious. For *Workers Power*:

"The Provisionals are fighting to end Britain's rule and end the partition that makes it possible. They are for the destruction of the sectarian state that Britain has fostered. We unconditionally support them in that struggle.... They can score spectacular successes and doubtless keep alive the hopes of those in the beleaguered ghettos. But they cannot drive the British out. In turn this increases the tendency of the republicans to seek out the spectacular military coup in retaliation against army and RUC operations. One such attempt was

from the needs of the masses; that its methods and particularly its bombing campaign whether in the north or in Britain, are a disastrous diversion." The crux of the matter is that in Ireland, both in the South and the Catholic community in the North, not to mention the Protestant community itself, the bombing was met with quite natural revulsion. Feeling this pressure, the Irish Workers Group attempted to distance itself from the IRA and its political wing, Sinn Fein: "Our condemnation therefore is an act of solidarity with the working classes and all the forces of the oppressed whose struggles have been set back by this event." They go further: "We condemn it however as an act whose consequences cannot but lead, as it already has led, to the consolidation and strengthening of the British and Irish ruling classes."

However, this does not stop the IWG from trying to let the IRA off the hook by stating that they "do not be-

workers power

FOR THE IRA AGAINST THE BRITISH ARMY

THE ENNISKILLEN bombing is, more than anything else, a reminder that Britain's eighteen years of direct military rule have failed to restore imperialist rule incapable of realising it.

We defend the right of the Provisionals to struggle by any means to end Britain's rule. We are for the revolutionary nationalists against the British imperialists unconditionally. But Enniskillen only underscores our criticisms of the blind alley the republicans are tragically trapped in.

Simultaneously, while condemning IRA violence, they reserve their right to systematically inflict their professionally trained terror upon the exploited and oppressed. For nearly eighteen years the British Army, UDR, RUC and orange bands have utilised every means of repression - Bloody Sunday, internment, juryless courts, repressive legislation, arbitrary curfews, and framing - in order to destroy the revolt of the people against the sectarian prison-house of the Northern Ireland State. The Thatcher administration differs from its predecessors only in its open and brazen racism and its complete and merciless victory over the IRA and its base among the minority population.

The IWG does not condemn in principle the use of violence as a means of political struggle. Our standpoint, on the contrary, is the revolutionary international working class tradition of armed insurrection by the mass of the armed class power of workers' councils and an Irish workers' state. From such a position, the tactical use of military action in defence of the anti-imperialist masses must always flow from a clear and consistent strategy for the liberation of the oppressed.

Irish Workers Group **Class Struggle**

Enniskillen

The Irish Workers' Group unequivocally condemns the IRA bombing at Enniskillen on November 8th. Our condemnation has nothing in common with the hypocritical representatives of the ruling classes in these islands and their apologists in the media and elsewhere.

Centrist school of "internationalism": "from each according to their capitulations..."

lieve that the IRA bomb was deliberately intended to kill civilians". Its condemnation of Enniskillen reflects a squeamish bending to public opinion rather than a break with the logic of IRA nationalism. Thus, you will find nowhere in the IWG's editorial the simple statement that Protestants have rights, including the right to exist. Such a Marxist position is, of course, utterly counterposed to all wings of Green nationalism, including its "left" apologists. The Spartacist League called the bombing exactly what it was:

"...an indefensible crime from the standpoint of the world working class, an act of indiscriminate terrorism. The Provisional IRA had placed the bomb...in a spot where civilians traditionally gather each year to watch the 'Remembrance Sunday' proceedings. While the IRA claims it did not trigger the bomb, regardless of how it was detonated the bomb was planted by the IRA at a gathering site of civilian not military personnel (the latter remained unscathed)." (*Workers Hammer*, January 1988)

Revolutionaries defend against the capitalist state the Republican perpetrators of acts that directly target British imperialism and its agents, as

for example the assassinations of Airey Neave and Earl Mountbatten. But any act of sectarian terror which leaves the slain corpses of Protestant men, women and children in a gutter does not further by one iota the cause of "Irish freedom", not to mention working-class revolution. A programme to mobilise the Catholic and Protestant working-class communities jointly against British imperialism, Orange loyalism and Irish nationalism is necessary to break the vicious cycle of reaction in Northern Ireland. Such a programme would include the demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the British Army, the smashing of the RUC, full democratic rights for the Catholic minority in the North, for a sliding scale of wages and hours, for programmatically based anti-sectarian workers militia to combat Orange and Green terror and imperialist rampage, no to forcible reunification — for an Irish workers republic within a socialist federation of the British Isles.

The centrists of *Workers Power*, it would appear, have fallen out over Enniskillen. But neither of their lines have anything to do with a proletarian communist programme or the struggle to forge an authentic Bolshevik party to carry it out. ■

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PAGE 4



Where Is Gorbachev's Russia Going?

PAGE 20

The Poland of Luxemburg vs. the Poland of Pilsudski
Memoirs of a Revolutionary Jewish Worker
A Review... PAGE 53

Ligue Trotskyste, Tribune Communiste fuse

Revolutionary regroupment in France

In early February the Ligue Trotskyste de France (LTF), section of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt), held its ninth conference jointly with the Tribune Communiste group. The conference voted the fusion of the two organisations. Tribune Communiste was a product of the "anti-opportunist" milieu around the French Communist Party (PCF). These comrades' longstanding impulse to defend the gains of the October Revolution opened the road to their break with Stalinism – which undermines the defence of these gains – in favour of the programme of Trotsky's Fourth International, upheld today uniquely by the iSt.

The lessons of their struggle to return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky have international significance. Tribune Communiste had its origins in the current headed by Michel Pablo which in the early 1950s abandoned Trotskyism, advocating "deep entry" into the mass reformist Stalinist and social-democratic parties. Pablo's most consistent followers Michele Mestre and Matthias Corvin broke organisationally with Pablo to enter the camp of the PCF where they remained as a submerged "loyal opposition" for a quarter century, publishing *Le Communiste*. The comrades of Tribune Communiste began to break out from this "unconditional" support for the CP in 1979-81 – standing fast in support of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, opposing Polish Solidarnosc and opposing the PCF's joining the anti-Soviet Mitterrand popular front. But while these positions represented an impulse to oppose the class-collaborationism inherent in Stalinism, they found that over Afghanistan, Poland and Mitterrand, all the major ostensibly Trotskyist organisations in



Paris, 27 January: LTF/Tribune Communiste contingent march in PCF-called protest against the fascist Le Pen.

France except the LTF were firmly and fulsomely in the anti-Soviet popular front.

As the Tribune Communiste group sought to break from the Pabloite liquidationist dead end, their political trajectory brought them face to face with the Ligue Trotskyste and the iSt. Increasingly known in France as "the Trotskyists who defend the Soviet Union" over Poland and Afghanistan, the LTF was also the only group which opposed from the beginning Mitterrand and his programme of anti-worker austerity in the service of the NATO war drive. After breaking with *Le Communiste*, over the next several years Tribune Communiste passed through a number of loose "committees" seeking to pull together the "anti-opportunists" in

the CP milieu. But this attempt to act as an external pressure group on the fringe of the PCF was no more successful than Pablo-style "deep entrism". Frustrated with the "circle spirit", they found that the LTF was having some modest success in recruiting militants directly from the CP youth. Entering into political discussions with the Ligue Trotskyste as well as united-front action against racist discrimination, they have in the course of examining the roots of Stalinism come to an understanding of the authentic programme of Leninism and Trotskyism. We welcome them to the international Spartacist tendency, in which they will play a leading role, not only in its French section.

"EUROCOMMUNISM" AND "ANTI-OPPORTUNISM"

Oppositional groupings espousing a more or less traditional pro-Moscow Stalinist outlook emerged in and around many West European Communist Parties in the 1970s, in response to "Eurocommunism". The Eurocommunists sought to distance themselves from Moscow and outline a posture of "national Communism" to reassure their own rulers that they would be "responsible" partners in hoped-for new popular front governmental coalitions – eg the attempts to reach an accommodation with the Catholic Church in Italy or even with the king of Spain! Thus from the beginning the Eurocommunists' anti-Sovietism, designed to prove to their "own" bourgeoisies – and to Washington – that they could be entrusted with ministerial portfolios, was intertwined with the appetite for class collaboration at home.

That "left" or "pro-Moscow" currents arose in response within the European CPs is not new or surprising. The bureaucratic Stalinist parties are

no stranger to cliques and factions adopting a "critical" stance in response to rightist turns, often animated by the fact that yesterday's opportunism frequently looks pretty indefensible today. So there has been no lack of left critics (especially after the fact) of particularly gross capitulations, who however accept the framework of the inviolability of "the Party" and locate their dissatisfactions in questions of "personalities" – eg "Browder was a revisionist" or conversely the adulation of the "good old days" of Togliatti or Thorez. To break from Stalinist reformism toward the road of Lenin requires the shattering of the false identification of the Russian Revolution and Communism with the Stalinist "gravediggers of revolution" who physically exterminated the Old Bolsheviks and transformed the Communist International from a world revolutionary party to a reformist prop of the bourgeois order.

At the same time, the growth of Eurocommunism within the traditionally Moscow-loyal CPs prompted considerable restlessness in "left" or so-called "hard" Stalinist milieus. The prostration of the CPs before bourgeois opinion represented an opening for propagandistic intervention by Trotskyists. The intensified anti-Soviet pressure inaugurated by US imperialism's hypocritical "human rights" crusade (the attempt to overcome America's humiliating defeat at the hands of the Vietnamese workers and peasants through a "moral" and military rearmament against Russia) led to the once-"loyal" pro-Moscow CPs openly bleeding for pro-Western "dissidents" like Sakharov, while being shame-faced or worse in response to the aggressive international campaign of the social democrats in support of clerical-reactionary Solidarnosc in Poland. With the imperialist rulers' anti-Soviet crusade heated to fever pitch by the Russian intervention in Afghanistan, the left CPers' "peaceful coexistence" with the sellout leaders of their own parties became markedly unstable.

The Soviet Union was forced to intervene in Afghanistan for defensive reasons centred on safeguarding its own borders, but the presence of Soviet troops on "foreign soil", and the necessary democratic and socially progressive measures undertaken from the top down by the Moscow-allied Kabul regime (eg the liberation of Afghan women from the medieval confines of illiteracy and the veil), raised the spectre of internationalism or "export of revolution", the quintessential "Trotskyite" heresy. With imperialism screaming for blood – and the US embracing the chance for a proxy war on the Soviet border by arming and financing the Afghan cutthroats to kill Russian soldiers – the Eurocommunists' anti-Sovietism led them into open support to imperialism. They



Presidium of First Congress of Lenin and Trotsky's Third International, 1919.

reasserted their loyalty to "democracy" by demanding the withdrawal of the Red Army, prompting the formation of even more significant oppositional tendencies, particularly in the Spanish and Italian parties. The role of Afghanistan in these polarisations is underlined by the sobriquets applied to the left currents by their proponents and detractors: "Afghanos" in Spain, "Kabulisti" in Italy and "Tankies" in Britain.

Yet these critics were unable to wage an effective fight against the Eurocommunist traitors because they adhered to the same Stalinist class collaborationist, popular frontist politics as the Berlinguers and Carillos. Smaller groupings, with more leftist impulses, like the Turkish TKP-*Iscin* and their British associates, the *Leninist*, also continued in practice to accept the minimum/maximum "two-stage revolution" framework which is a hallmark of Menshevism and Stalinism, while clinging to the illusion of reforming the "world communist movement".

At bottom, such tendencies believed that in this period of renewed Cold War, loyalty to the Soviet Union was going to be able to stop "the Party" from engaging in class collaboration and capitulating to social democracy. Gorbachev's detente campaign has dealt such illusions a cruel blow. Not only does Gorbachev project permanent "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism, but he has acceded to the imperialists' demands to pull the Red Army out of Afghanistan! These oppositional tendencies, which coalesced in support of the Soviet intervention, have necessarily been thrown into disarray now that they can no longer claim that their leftist impulses find support in the Soviet bureaucracy or a section of it. If they do not want to solidarise with the horrifying prospect of abandoning the Afghan peoples to be massacred by Islamic reaction, they must confront the historical roots of "peaceful coexistence" in the Stalinist political counterrevolution in Russia. The objective possibilities for such a fundamental reexamination of Communist history are facilitated as well by the phenomenon of Gorbachev's *glasnost* which has tended to take the question of Trotsky and the Left Opposition (as well as Bukharin and the "Rights") out of the realm of demonology. No longer can Trotsky's fight against the Stalinist usurpers be simply dismissed with slanders about "Mikado agents" and "anti-socialist saboteurs"; thus, even Stalin's successors in the Kremlin bureaucracy acknowledge at last that Trotsky was an historical figure of the Communist movement who waged a fight over policy and programme.

The Stalinist bureaucratic caste seeks to defend their position sitting atop the collectivised economy from which their privileges derive by appeasing and conciliating imperialism rather than promoting international revolution. Stalin's Comintern, as a transmission belt for this policy of international class collaboration, became essentially similar to the social democrats of the Second International, who rallied to their "own" bourgeoisies in 1914. The catastrophe of 1933, when Hitler's fascists came to power unopposed by the powerful German workers movement, was not just an "error" or a defeat, even a defeat of enormous proportions which paved the way directly for world war; it was a crime, generalised and underscored by the Stalin-Laval pact and the adoption at the Comintern's Seventh World Congress of the "People's Front" line which

sanctified consistent class collaboration in the name of an "alliance" with the "progressive" imperialist bourgeoisie. The Communist Parties had become bourgeois workers parties, reformist props for capitalist rule, fundamentally little different from the social-democratic parties which balance between their proletarian base and the dictates of their bourgeois masters. The CPs, however, have an additional contradiction: they must try to serve two counterposed masters: the Moscow Stalinist bureaucracy and the "progressive" bourgeoisie of their own countries, which



Le Bolchevik

Revolutionary Trotskyists of the LTF never called for a vote to Mitterrand! Mitterrand with PCF leader George Marchais (right)

hates and fears the Soviet Union. Their leadership has thus spent decades seeking to resolve each contradiction on the side of reformism; Eurocommunism is an inevitable product of Stalinism.

The Tribune Communiste comrades found that a revolutionary proletarian alternative to reformism cannot be built within the political framework of Stalinism, which gutted the Communist International of its internationalist content long before its formal liquidation in 1943. This is the basic Marxist perspective encapsulated in the title of the resolution adopted at Tribune Communiste's pre-fusion conference: "From the Illusory Transformation of the PCF to the Road of Lenin and Trotsky".

THE HERITAGE OF LE COMMUNISTE

Shared pro-Sovietism did not make the various oppositional tendencies any less nationally heterogeneous than the "world Communist movement" of which they claimed to be part. Lacking a programme for world socialist revolution, each such grouping was and remains a prisoner of its specific national terrain.

Tribune Communiste issued from the *Le Communiste* group, whose history is indeed illustrative. For *Le Communiste* originated as a by-product of the Pabloite revision of Trotskyism which destroyed the Fourth International (FI) as the world party of socialist revolution. As Tribune Communiste grappled with its own history in the course of its break from Stalinism, they were confronted with Pabloism, the attempt to find a substitute for the proletariat organised by its conscious vanguard under the banner of Trotskyism in resolving the crisis of revolutionary leadership. The LTF-Tribune Communiste fusion

thus based itself on the article "Genesis of Pabloism" (*Spartacist* no 21, Fall 1972) as well as the documents of the first four Congresses of the Communist International.

Following the Second World War, the Trotskyist movement was thrown into a profound political crisis. The Fourth International was founded in 1938 in the urgent attempt, as the alignments for World War II took shape, to resolve the "crisis of leadership" which had left the international proletariat defenceless before fascism and imperialist carnage. But the small Trotskyist forces were in



no credit

effect militarily defeated. The physical obliteration of the Left Opposition in Russia by the Moscow Trial blood purges was completed by the assassination of Trotsky in Mexico by a Stalinist agent in 1940. Large numbers of Trotskyist cadre in Europe and Asia were wiped out by fascist terror, by the war and by Stalinist repression. The younger generation of European Trotskyist militants, including its most promising young leaders, was decimated, facilitating the ascendancy of Michel

also assisted Pablo to emerge as a leader of the post-war FI.

The post-war Trotskyist movement was disoriented as well by new developments. Trotsky had predicted that the war would provoke social convulsion throughout the capitalist world, as the First World War had done, which would necessarily have a profoundly destabilising effect on the international Stalinist movement. That this prediction was quite correct is shown for example by the Red Army's initial collapse in the face of Hitler's invasion, as well as by the turbulent social conditions in Western Europe at the war's end. In Italy and Greece, naked treachery by the Stalinists was required to militarily and politically disarm the leftist Resistance forces and hand power back to the capitalist class, while in France the Stalinists had to work overtime as proponents of capitalist "national reconstruction" in order to reestablish a stable bourgeois regime. Nonetheless, the Stalinists were successful in deflecting revolutionary struggle and emerged seemingly stronger than before in a number of Western European countries, notably Italy and France, based on their resistance to the Nazis.

An additional, unexpected development was the expansion of Stalinist-ruled states in Eastern Europe. With the military victory of the Red Army over the Nazis and their puppet regimes, the former rulers ran madly for the nearest American headquarters, leaving behind a power vacuum which the Soviet army quickly filled, setting up "coalition governments". Faced with the intransigence of American imperialism at the onset of the Cold War, the Stalinists found themselves forced to set up deformed workers states. A different process occurred in Yugoslavia (and in China), where peasant-based revolutions took place under Stalinist leadership. Confronted with the restabilisation and expansion of Stalinist-ruled states, the impressionistic current associated with Pablo came to believe that Stalinism could play an "objectively revolutionary" role.

Pabloite revisionism emerged as an attempt to make the FI more "effective" by accommodating it to the existing leaderships of the working class. Michel Pablo, leader of the



Workers Hammer

As Soviet troops entered Afghanistan, Spartacists hailed Red Army.

Pablo, whose major characteristic was his impressionism. The political passivity of the American SWP (which was a relatively strong party due to the roots of James Cannon and other American Trotskyist leaders in the early CP and a subsequent close working collaboration with Trotsky, and which as an American organisation was spared the brunt of the carnage in Europe) towards the devastated European movement after the war

International Secretariat of the FI, called for a policy of "entrism sui generis" (entrism of its own kind) in which the Trotskyists would enter the mass Stalinist and social-democratic parties with the perspective of staying there for a long period to pressure the reformists to the left. Pablo rationalised this political liquidation theoretically, projecting first "centuries of deformed workers

continued on page 6

From illusory reform of the CP to Trotskyism

(Continued from page 5)

states", then, in his 1951 document, "Where Are We Going?", the imminence of a Third World War which would force the Stalinists into "roughly outlining a revolutionary orientation".

The essence of the Pabloite perspective was its objectivism, a "new world reality" in which the tide of revolution is irreversible. Not the Leninist proletarian party, but rather a "blunted instrument" is seen as sufficient for the socialist revolution. This method was not confined to the evaluation of Stalinism; the European Pabloists engaged in deep entrenchment in the mass reformist parties (both Stalinist and social-democratic) of Western Europe during the 1950s and 1960s, only to shift over to more "mod" targets thereafter: "Algerian socialism" a la Ben Bella, the Cuban Revolution and the petty-bourgeois adventurist efforts to replay Cuba elsewhere in Latin America, infatuation with Vietnamese Stalinism after the American escalation of the war propelled the growth of the student "New Left", the elitist "Red University" radicalism, and so on—endless efforts to find an elusive "new mass vanguard" as a substitute for the Leninist struggle to break the working class programmatically from its traditional reformist leaderships. The essential method of Pabloism is "let the other guys do it", with the candidates for the "other guys" changing rapidly as the impressionists scramble to tail after whatever seems to be "moving". Thus in recent years, Ernest Mandel & Co became "Eurotrotskyists" tailing the most right-wing sectors of the Western Stalinist parties and the social democrats directly, attempting to broker a lash-up of the "far left" that could act as a pressure group on the popular front. In the service of Cold War social democracy they today hail clerical-nationalist Solidarnosc and call for the withdrawal of the Red Army from Afghanistan in the face of the CIA-backed Islamic reactionaries.

In the France of 1954, Michele Mestre and Matthias Corvin, former leaders of the French section of the FI and associated with Pablo, took Pabloism to its logical conclusion by founding *Le Communiste*. They broke openly with Trotskyism and began a quarter-century of semi-clandestine "opposition" as the would-be left conscience of the PCF. As the comrades of Tribune Communiste wrote:

"As 'Le Communiste' left, it discovered a 'fundamental error' in the Fourth International, namely that the parties of the Third International had never betrayed the cause of proletarian revolution. In her pamphlet entitled 'In Defence of Communism,' Mestre wrote: 'to the credit of the Trotskyist movement it should be admitted that the error was facilitated by the opportunist course of alliance with the democratic bourgeoisie followed (from 1933 on) by the Communist Party of the USSR as well as by other communist parties.' 'Socialism in one country; the liquidation of the soviets; the liquidation of the party, reduced to the role of a tool of the bureaucracy; the execution of virtually all of the 1917 Bolshevik Central Committee; the decapitation of the Red Army; the defeat of the German proletariat; the crushing of the Chinese Revolution; the defeat in Spain—all



James P Cannon, founding leader of American Trotskyism.

that was reduced to the level of a mere opportunist course which one can undertake to correct."

—"From the Illusory Transformation of the PCF..."

What the founding charter of *Le Communiste* termed the "defence of the USSR" was in reality the defence of the Soviet bureaucracy. A "process of regeneration" was substituted for proletarian political revolution and *Le Communiste* naturally hailed both Khrushchev's 20th Congress speech and the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution later that same year.

Ironically, Mestre herself, in spite of these apologies for Stalinism, was never admitted to membership in the PCF, a party which *Le Communiste* continued to hold was "the party of the working class" even in the face of the PCF's betrayal of a pre-revolutionary situation in May 1968.

THE CORNERSTONE OF STALINISM

Against more than 60 years of defeats and betrayals for which Stalinism is responsible, Trotskyism represents the expression of a scientifically grounded historical optimism: the party, bearer of the revolutionary programme expressing the historic interests of the working class, can win the proletariat away from its treacherous traditional leaders to undertake the socialist transformation of the world. Conversely, all the apologists for Stalinism share the conception that the bureaucracy is the sole guardian of collectivised property forms, since any popular revolt, even centred on the proletariat, inevitably leads to capitalist counterrevolution. The logic underlying the Stalinist vision is deeply pessimistic and in fact pro-capitalist: a working class which has experienced a Stalinist regime will, according to them, inevitably prefer bourgeois democracy! The social democrats, who aspire to play the role of spearhead of counterrevolution with a "democratic" face in the deformed workers states, have never thought any differently.

It was this Stalinist cornerstone that the comrades who had formed Tribune Communiste a year earlier confronted in 1981, the year of the Polish crisis and the coming to power of the Mitterrand popular front. In December 1981, two initiators of Tribune Communiste—the comrades Emile Fabrol, then a member of the

Le Communiste leadership, and Yannick—correctly gave military support to Jaruzelski's counter-coup d'etat—a counter to the real attempt to take power by the counterrevolutionary forces of Solidarnosc. But at the same time, they fought, with others, against the position of also giving political support to the Polish bureaucracy. They wrote of the state of siege: "these measures will not settle anything basic as long as the lines are not called into question: political line of capitulating to nationalist, petty bourgeois and reactionary forces, economic line consisting of ever increasing subordination of the economy to imperialist capitalist countries."

At the same time, they were among those who convinced the editorial board majority of *Le Communiste* to refuse, for the first time, to vote for the PCF in the legislative elections of June 1981, in opposition to the entry of the PCF in an anti-working class, anti-Soviet popular front. Their factional opponents called for "a vote in principle for the party of the working class".

This was the intersection of the Russian question and the popular front—to build such class-collaborationist alliances the bourgeoisie demands of its labour lieutenants two key guarantees: not to touch capitalist property relations and to support "national defence". As the PCF's support to the Laval-Stalin pact of 1935 (in which Stalin "fully approved" the need for French imperialism's military preparations) was integral to the formation of the popular front, so the PCF support to the anti-Soviet *force de frappe* (and a joint declaration with the Socialist Party calling for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, in June 1981) was a necessary precondition for its participation in the Mitterrand government.

The positions of the comrades of Tribune Communiste were principled, yet partial, and not yet generalised. But the Stalinist methodology which had frozen *Le Communiste* in its sterile and deeply opportunist apologies for betrayal had begun to break down.

THE CONFRONTATION WITH TROTSKYISM

The LTF was alone among the "far left" groups in France in opposing a vote to the "Socialist" Cold Warrior Mitterrand. In the fall of 1980, the LTF raised the possibility of savagely critical support to Marchais of the BCF. The Cold War offensive by the

social democracy had pushed the PCF into a "ghetto" of electoral isolation: for defensive reasons Marchais' hypocritical posture of independence from the bourgeoisie involved "self-criticism" of the popular fronts of 1936, 1945 and the 1972 Union of the Left ("three times is enough"). The LTF recognised in the Leninist tactic of critical support a means of exacerbating the contradictions in the PCF's campaign, setting the base of the party against the top. But in December 1980, the PCF mayor of the town of Vitry led a spectacular commando raid on a housing project inhabited by black African workers in defence of a racist quota for "his" municipality. The PCF not only defended but highlighted this revolting chauvinism in order to refurbish its patriotic credentials. The PCF's racist campaign thus rendered critical support impossible.

At the same time, the iSt's Soviet defencist line was becoming increasingly known within the ranks of the PCF. Sales of French *Spartacist* with the headline "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" at the 1980 May Day march were booming as one older worker exclaimed, "I didn't know the Trotskyists defended the Soviet Union". In October 1981 a Stalinist security squad was given the job of moving away LTF militants distributing a leaflet, "Stop Solidarnosc counterrevolution", in front of a meeting with Walesa hosted by the pro-PCF CGT trade-union federation. "I agree with you about Poland, but I have my orders", complained one of them.

Similarly in January 1982, during the wave of anti-Communist hysteria following the blocking of Solidarnosc' attempted coup, the LTF proposed to the UEC, the Stalinist student organisation, at the Paris campus of Tolbiac, a jointly defended debate on the topic "How Should the Social Gains in Poland Be Defended?" after the UEC had been the victim of social-democratic gangsterism. The LTF went ahead with the meeting, with a standing invitation to the UEC—if the UEC bureaucrats didn't dare show up, some of its members did, among them a future member of Tribune Communiste. Anti-communists launched a savage physical assault on the meeting, but the LTF not only successfully defended itself, it ran an aggressive campaign for its right to organise on the campus.

The LTF also sought to polarise what appeared to be, seen from the outside, a heterogeneous "anti-opportunist" milieu, and wrote:



Above: Bulletin No. 52-53, October 1936
Headline: "The Moscow Trials—Trial of October"
Picture caption: "The Real Defendants"

Bulletin of the Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninist)

The complete Russian *Bulletin of the Opposition* is a primary documentary record of the struggle of the Bolshevik-Leninists during the period of Leon Trotsky's exile from the Soviet Union in 1929 until August 1941. Addressing the urgent programmatic issues for revolutionists facing World War II—Hitler's rise to power, the Popular Front, the defense of the Soviet Union—the *Bulletin*, edited by Trotsky, was the journal most heavily and directly influenced by him during this period.

A publisher's note in the first issue stated: "The immediate aim of this publication is to serve the practical struggle in the Soviet Republic for the cause of Marx and Lenin." The last number published an appeal "For the Defense of the USSR."

Read the true history of the Trotskyist fight for Soviet military defense, soviet democracy and international proletarian revolution!

In Russian
Volume I 1929-1930 Volume III 1934-1937
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Price: \$180 (four-volume set, postpaid)

Order from: Spartacist
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116, USA

"Whatever criticisms it makes, *Le Communiste* is trying to keep PCF militants inside the rotten reformist corpse of the 'Party' by avoiding any serious confrontation with the real causes of the PCF's reformism. In effect, they say that the working class cannot hope for anything better than its current treacherous leadership. They eliminate the French – and German, Polish and Russian – working classes as agents of revolutionary change by advising them to make do with what they have. In fact, the PCF is no place for a communist and there is an alternative – the revolutionary programme with which Lenin and Trotsky led the Russian Revolution." – *Le Bolchevik* no 27, September 1981

We didn't know it at the time, but the comrades of Tribune Communiste were even then beginning to break with the philistine notion that "the working class has the leadership it deserves".

In November 1982, Tribune Communiste broke with *Le Communiste*. In the next four years it passed through a number of loose "committees" federating a number of local "anti-opportunist" groups. (*Le Communiste* encouraged the multiplication of such local groups – as a purely literary, external pressure group on the PCF. The "anti-opportunist" current, which Tribune Communiste correctly notes was a "hybrid concept" in between "revolutionary" and "opportunist", was incapable of Leninist functioning.)

could make one despair. For us, the continuity of the revolutionary struggle had been broken by Stalinism in 1935: there was a gap of fifty years of experience of the workers movement to be bridged."

In their evolution to the left, they were repulsed by the pro-social democratic anti-Sovietism of the entire fake-Trotskyist left: the gangsters of Lambert's PCI, the economist philistines of Lutte Ouvriere and the Pabloite LCR, which found the pro-Mitterrand, anti-Soviet "Renovateur" Pierre Juquin (who led a recent rightist split out of the PCF) more to its taste. Indeed, more than once, the comrades of Tribune Communiste found themselves intervening against the popular front, against Solidarnosc, for the Red Army in Afghanistan in parallel to the LTF against the pseudo-Trotskyists.

When they began discussing with the LTF in the summer of 1987, two central questions remained to be resolved. The first was the nature of the bureaucracy as shown particularly over the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. As they write: "we conceived the question of revitalising the soviets in the USSR and the deformed workers states abstractly and inconsistently. Our view that the intervention of Soviet troops [in Hungary] against the workers councils was an act in defence of the gains of October; that the workers councils were a kind of Solidarnosc, did not stand up to an analysis of the facts and historic documents. Hungary 1956 was in fact an attempt to build a real



no credit

Hungary 1956: Beginning of the proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy

"Trotskyist ideas". On the eve of the fusion they participated in a joint contingent with the LTF, marching with the LTF under the slogans of "Worker/Immigrant Mobilisations to Smash the Fascists" and "Full Citizenship Rights for Immigrants" in the anti-fascist demonstration of 27 January organised by the PCF.

In their fusion resolution Tribune Communiste declared the iSt to be the continuity of Trotskyism. The combat, essentially carried out by the American, British and the majority of the French sections against Pablo, resulting in the 1953 split, although partial, belated and thereby weakened, was a necessary one, one which defended the Trotskyist programme against liquidationism. It made possible the continuity of Trotskyism today represented by our tendency, which arose as an opposition within the American SWP to that party's embrace, a decade after the ascendancy of Pabloist revisionism in Europe, of Pabloist objectivism expressed in uncritical adulation of a new "new world reality" as represented by Castro's revolution in Cuba. Rejecting the demoralisation and historical pessimism that Pabloism made into a revisionist political

system, the international Spartacist tendency today fights to *reforge* the world party of socialist revolution on the basis of the authentic internationalist programme of Lenin and Trotsky.

The regroupment with Tribune Communiste takes place on the firm foundation of the defence of the gains of the October Revolution against the increasingly discredited stream of Cold War II anti-Sovietism. Therefore, it could have a powerful impact on those left Stalinists like the *Leninist* in Britain who despite their political disorientation on other questions, retain an impulse to defend the Soviet Union against their own NATO-loving bourgeoisie and its servile Labourite agents within the workers movement. Tribune Communiste's struggle to come to grips with its history in the course of seeking to rediscover a Leninist orientation in effect ran the film of Pabloite liquidationism backwards: from Stalinism to Pabloism and back to authentic Trotskyism. As a consequence, not only have valuable cadre been won for the struggle to reforge the Fourth International, but our international tendency carries on that struggle with deepened experience and understanding. ■



CIA-backed mullahs execute school teachers; Red Army must win in Afghanistan!

They ended up in the "United Communist Regroupment" (RCU) which proposed to go back to the traditions of the Communist International without any analysis of how or why the International had been destroyed! In September 1986 they were expelled from the RCU for the heresy of proposing to actually recruit militants out of the PCF. Tribune Communiste was frustrated with the "anti-opportunist" "circle spirit"; they wanted to intervene into reality armed with a programme. They began to notice that it was the LTF with its forthright declaration that "the PCF is no place for a communist!" which was having some modest success in recruiting militants from the PCF. It was indicative of their break from the sclerosis of the whole *Le Communiste* tradition that shortly before entering into political discussions with the LTF, they proposed a united-front action in Paris in the context of a campaign initiated by the LTF against the racist discrimination practiced by the "Flunch" cafeteria in Rouen.

REFORGE THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!

These comrades described their quandary after being expelled from the RCU as follows: "At first, it seemed to us that we had to rethink everything, which, given our forces,

dictatorship of the proletariat based on workers democracy and the power of the soviets. We would have been on the same side of the barricades as the insurgents."

The second was the question of "Trotskyism". They had accepted the declaration by Mestre of the Fourth International's "bankruptcy" and comrade Fabrol in particular had been taught by Corvin that Trotsky's analyses – the *Revolution Betrayed*, for example – were even correct, but now irrelevant. The real question was the continuing grip of the dogma of the PCF as "the party of the working class" and the heritage of the decades of Stalinist slander.

As late as October 1987 they put out a petition which was their last attempt at trying to influence and pressure PCF militants as PCF militants, a petition calling on the PCF not to withdraw in the second round of the upcoming presidential elections in favour of Mitterrand. But a vote to the PCF would not have been and is not even a deformed expression of opposition to the popular front and the PCF candidate had just "debated" the fascist Le Pen on television!

However, these comrades were won to the need for programmatic clarity and the conception that, as Trotsky said, "In politics the 'label' is also the 'banner'", breaking with the essentially Pabloite notion that generalises the surreptitious smuggling in of

Spartacist League **public** **meeting**

Speaker from the Central Committee of the Ligue Trotskyste de France and former member of Tribune Communiste

Venue: Room 3C

University of London Union
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Time: 7:30 PM

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Workers...

(Continued from page 1)

parliamentarian windbag Neil Kinnock. During the printers strike, the "left" union leaders dismantled picket lines in favour of an impotent consumer boycott, claiming that the way to stop union-busting laws was not through militancy but by electing a Labour government. And by and large the Labourite fakers were successful: the level of strike activity in 1986 sank to a 50-year low. Meanwhile the bosses were grinding up the rate of exploitation: corporate profits soared by 20 per cent last year, and the unions remained passive. But the vile Kinnock lost big, Thatcher winning a huge majority. Workers certainly have no reason to expect any presents from Thatcher, and at this time the prospects for a Labour government seem remote. Hence, trade union struggle appears as the most viable way to better one's position. Despite the strenuous efforts of trade union misleaders to keep workers chained to their job, the militant strikers have succeeded in piercing through the all-sided suppression of social struggle imposed by the labour fakers.

But the current battles differ in one significant aspect from the year-long miners struggle. The miners strike was a massive political confrontation with the government and the capitalist class. Today workers grimly remember the backstabbing treachery of the labour tops. A frequent refrain on the picket lines is that it would be suicide to take on the government. Rather the current strikes are an attempt to recover what's been lost through economic struggle at the point of production. This mood of militant economism is reflected in the observation of one Ford Dagenham worker on the changes since the strike ten years ago:

"Back then, the average Ford worker was much more of a socialist," he said. "Workers now understand the need for the company to make profits. We realize that our future as workers is tied to the company. But what the company is asking for now is too much, too early, for too little." — *New York Times*, 14 February

The trade union bureaucrats, slow off the mark, are now hustling to foster illusions that significant gains can be achieved through atomised trade union battles that do not challenge the framework of British capitalism. Ford union officials traded off minimal wage increases for class-collaborationist productivity deals, designed to safeguard company profits. And Ford spelled out what that meant in a confidential document leaked during the strike, which indicated that the company intended to reduce its workforce in the next four years at its key Dagenham plant alone by 3000. In short, by working harder, Ford employees will be working themselves out of a job! And a 7 per cent annual wage increase, barely exceeding the rate of inflation, doesn't do much to address miserably low living standards: British car workers earn *one-half* the pay of German car workers!

The Thatcher regime endlessly pontificates on the British "economic miracle". The Tories have "increased productivity" by devastating the country's heavy industrial base. Since 1983 half the mining workforce has been slashed; two-thirds of British Steel's workers have been made redundant since the 1980 strike. Overall manufacturing output is no higher than it was in 1979. There's been little investment in new plants; Brit-

Economic devastation in Britain means misery for millions.



ish companies "have achieved performance gains by intensifying the use of labour on existing production systems" (*Financial Times*, 5 February). Leading scientists bewail the insignificant spending on research and development, noting that Britain stands "to be reduced to the level of a third world economy, based on tourism and the supply of cheap labour for the assembly of goods designed, and destined to be enjoyed elsewhere" (*Independent*, 28 August 1987). Margaret Thatcher's formula for increasing British "competitiveness" boils down to low wages, speedup and docile or nonexistent unions—roughly the same factors that make Taiwan or Singapore attractive to foreign investors.

There's supposed to be an economic "recovery" here, but in Britain a capitalist "boom" means 10 per cent unemployment—over 30 per cent among black and Asian youth—and third world pay rates. Trade union reform-

Labourite and major architect of the NHS, boasted in his book *In Place of Fear*: "No political party would survive that tried to destroy it." In fact, the NHS—meant to provide free medical care to all—has been going to shambles almost from the time of its establishment in 1948. Within three years the first Labour post-war government has instituted charges on dental work and glasses. Successive Labour and Tory governments have shut down hospitals, driven tens of thousands of trained nurses and technicians out by paying slave-labour wages, cut back on staff and training. Now Thatcher wants to finish the job through her privatisation schemes, leaving 90 per cent of the populace out in the cold.

Outrage over the demise of the NHS—about the only real gain post-war Labourism has to show—is deeply felt throughout the society. But Kinnock & Co openly opposed even the one-day nurses strike overwhelmingly supported by the population at large. Joined by a section of the Tories, Labour argues that the government throw funds into the NHS currently earmarked for tax cuts. Kinnock thinks speeches in Westminster will do the job, Benn wants a little extra-parliamentary pressure. The fake lefts go one better by demanding the TUC call a general strike on "budget day"! Appealing to the proven strikebreakers of the TUC is obviously ludicrous, while the demand for a general strike—which would imply a struggle for political power—is reduced to a gimmick to pressure Thatcher to reshuffle her budget! The fake leftists and Kinnock, Willis et al share the same parliamentary perspective. Thus, at the big demonstration in London on 5 March, the Socialist Workers Party was simultaneously chanting for a general strike and demanding "no tax cuts for the rich".

The nurses actions have been marginal, with the labour fakers enforcing "emergency cover" provisions tantamount to scabbing on yourself. Still, the NHS protests have provoked solidarity strikes by workers at Vauxhall and London dockers. When militant British Rail drivers at the key King's Cross station in London threatened to strike alongside the nurses, they were denounced by the national ASLEF leadership; then the government got an injunction. Should there be a significant strike in the NHS, it would likely evoke a powerful response in the working class. Revolutionaries would call on the unions to join the strike and fight for their own pay claims as well. But this would mean a major confrontation with the government and its strike-breaking apparatus, underlying all the more the necessity for a revolutionary party counterposed to Labour's class traitors.

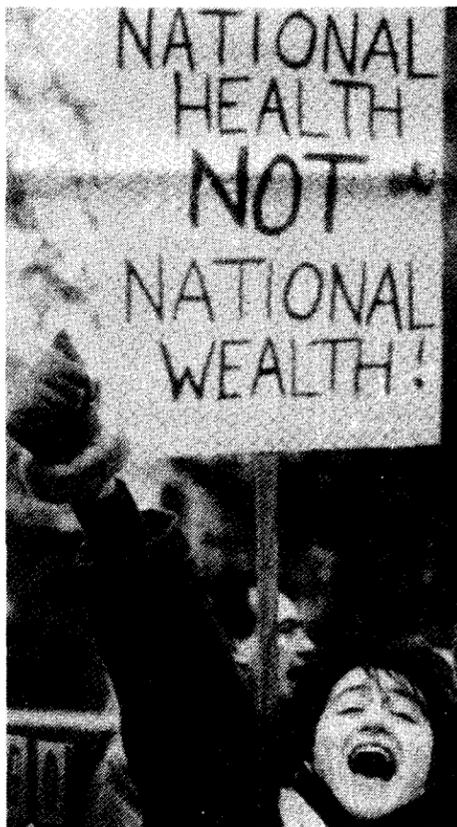
Of course, Marxists oppose Thatcher's attempts to privatise health care, and we would demand that private hospitals—about the only places where you're guaranteed de-

cent treatment—be nationalised. But our perspective is far different from the Labourite perspective of "support the NHS", ie, maintaining the status quo. What this means is captured in a slogan carried by a demonstrator at an NHS protest: "National health not national wealth." This typifies British social democracy, with its poverty fetishism. It's dead wrong: you won't get anything resembling free, quality medical care, including free abortion on demand—not to mention the billions needed for research into AIDS and other killer diseases—in a moth-eaten capitalist society like Britain. What this country needs is a lot *more* social wealth, so we'll be able to afford to build and staff some decent hospitals, as well as schools, housing, etc. And that requires a socialist revolution—not Labourite bailouts of bankrupt bosses but the revolutionary expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

BANKRUPTCY OF LABOURISM

The British labour movement historically has combined union militancy and parliamentary cretinism. Put otherwise, the typical shop steward believes in fighting the class struggle but not in finally winning it. In this very social democratic country "political struggle" means electing a Labour government to administer capitalism. The trade union and LP tops have a gentlemanly division of labour: "politics" are for MPs and "economic" concerns for unions. Thus, economist militancy is really the flip side of parliamentarianism. Particularly when Labour is out of office, the trade union tops tolerate a certain level of struggle, as long as it's kept marginalised and doesn't threaten the capitalist order. This is then used as a bargaining chip by the Labour Party, which appeals to the bourgeoisie that it is better able to discipline the unions. Unless the Labour Party is split and displaced by a revolutionary party, the current strike wave, if it continues, will create the conditions for a new Labour or coalition government. Vicious and myopic, Thatcher could lose the confidence of the bourgeoisie by inflaming rather than defusing social struggle. Or alternatively the working class, saddled with a scabberding Kinnock leadership, will be thrust into a major confrontation with Thatcher.

Discredited by their treachery during the miners strike, spectacular electoral failure and general wimpiness as an opposition to Thatcher, the Kinnockite leadership may have difficulty in keeping the lid on. Enter the Labour "lefts" like Tony Benn who has been making noises about running for party leader. Last month his Campaign group came out in support of the nurses' token one-day strike action, in opposition to the Kinnockite majority. Playing the classic role of the "lefts", Benn is positioning himself at some distance from the openly backstabbing leadership—the better to corral militants



Brenda Prince/Format

Decrepit British society needs more wealth! No solution to health service crisis, mass unemployment this side of socialist revolution.

ism, premised on extracting a larger slice of the pie from the bosses, doesn't do any good when the entire system is bankrupt. Within the framework of decrepit British capitalism, there's no way out of the cycle of low wages and mass redundancies. Revolutionaries in the unions must seek to transform the atomised economic strike struggles into a class-wide offensive directly not only against Thatcher but against the capitalist order itself.

STRUGGLE OVER THE NHS

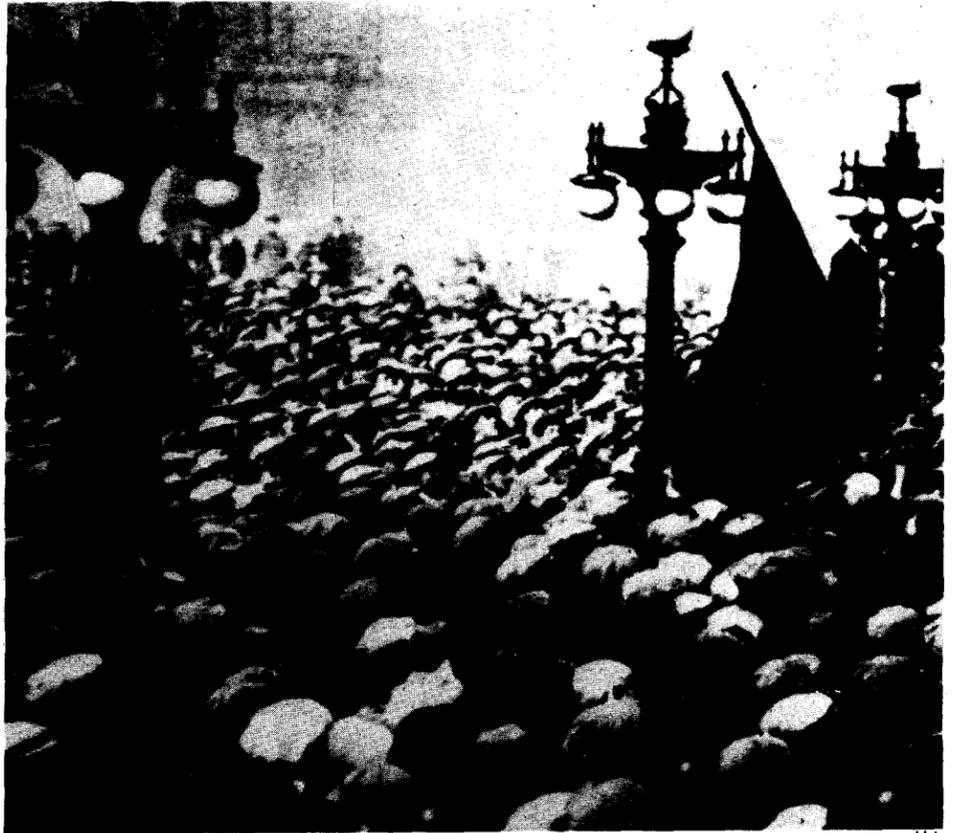
The crisis of the National Health Service exemplifies the wretched social conditions in this country. Aneurin Bevan, the prominent left

back into Labour's fold. If the workers go into struggle, the "lefts" want to be able to exploit this militancy in the interest of Labour's electoral ambitions.

The fundamental reformist identity between all wings of Labourism was demonstrated sharply during the miners strike. Had the miners won, it would have deeply destabilised the bourgeois order, opening the road to the struggle for power. This is anathema to social democrats of all stripes, who want to preserve the capitalist state apparatus intact. Thus, while the Labour/TUC tops openly scabbered against the miners, the "left" union leaders delivered the finishing blow by refusing to call out their ranks in strike action alongside the NUM. We called for what was needed at the time: a fighting triple alliance of miners, railway workers and dockers that would have been in effect a general strike, shutting down the country and posing the question of which class shall rule. Benn rallied to Kinnock's side in the interest of preserving Labour's "unity" and capitalist order. During the elections the "lefts", including Scargill, campaigned for Kinnock.

and turn to the programme of communism" neglects the fact there is a road-block which must be removed here: namely the Labour Party. Referring to the recent strikes, *Leninist* writes that "Such actions multiplied a thousand fold will bring the Thatcher government and all its reactionary legislation crumbling down". But the question, then is, to be replaced by what? If it is not going to be another Labour regime administering capitalism, then a political struggle must be waged against Tony Benn (mentioned briefly, uncritically by *Leninist*) and Arthur Scargill whom they supported in the NUM elections as well as Ramsay MacKinnock and the sellout trade union bureaucrats.

During the general elections, *Leninist* called for a vote *only* to the candidates of the Euro-CPGB. Their election article noted correctly that "Defeat for Labour at the polls is not a defeat for the working class" and sought to draw a political line against the numerous fake-left groupings that advocated support to Kinnock's Labour Party (*Leninist*, 4 June 1987). But the CPGB is hardly a left alternative to Labour; indeed while



no credit

Legacy of heroic class struggle: massive 1919 Clyde general strike (above) was met with armed troops.



5 March TUC "Day of Action" was designed to defuse class anger over NHS crisis.

So did most of the fake-revolutionary left. When reduced to their essentials, the programme of the fake lefts is the same as that of British Labourism. The SWP, for example, is notorious for championing economist militancy while reducing "politics" to a ritual vote to Labour under all circumstances. But the Cliffites are hardly unique. Thus in an editorial entitled "The New Mood of Militancy", the Workers Power group enthuses over "the possibility and necessity of launching a generalised offensive against the Tories", which pointedly omits the call for a revolutionary party. Their real position is spelled out in another article where they demand that Tony Benn's Campaign group challenge Kinnock for party leadership. "If Benn and Wise stand against Kinnock and Hattersley, then we must demand that they become the voice inside the Party for all those fighting Thatcher now" (*Workers Power*, February 1988). This is a classic formulation of "Make the Lefts fight", implying that the Labour Party can be transformed into a revolutionary instrument through its left reformist wing.

The *Leninist* (4 March) editorials are about the "burning need for genuine communist leadership". But its conclusion that a new generation of militant rank and file leaders will inevitably have to face the question of "whether to break with reformism

Morning Star simply called for a vote to Labour, the CPGB's *Marxism Today* went so far as to advocate "tactical voting", an explicit appeal for an anti-Thatcher popular front. *Leninist's* perspective which has been to "reforge" the reformist CP and its stated desire to oppose Labourism embody a *contradiction*: well over five decades ago the CPGB gave up every semblance of revolutionary struggle and since then has operated mainly as a pressure group on the fringes of the larger Labour Party, tying workers politically to social democracy.

Support for Benn now simply serves to refurbish the tattered "socialist" credentials of this *bourgeois workers party*. The syphilitic chain extending from Kinnock through to the ostensibly revolutionary left dooms the proletariat to the dead-end of Labourite electoralism. For decades, British capitalism has relied on this obstacle to the working-class struggle for power. What is urgently needed is the construction of a Leninist vanguard party, regrouping subjective revolutionaries along hard programmatic lines and splitting the working class away from the pro-capitalist Labour tops. In the absence of such a party, newly-politicised layers entering the class struggle will be diverted and manoeuvred into voting cattle for the next Labour electoral campaign.

Should Kinnock get into office, workers can expect to be made to pay for decaying British imperialism's share of the war drive against the Soviet Union, including an even more vicious version of the last Lib/Lab government's wage controls, combined with token efforts to prop up what's left of Britain's devastated nationalised industries. Labour's post-war nationalisations were really capitalist bailouts. The bankrupt owners were offered huge rates of compensation, paid for by low wages and high taxes imposed on the working masses, thereby draining the entire economy for the benefit of these parasitic coupon-clippers. Less efficient than their private competitors, such nationalised firms have even more resort to redundancies, wage restraint and speedup.

The NATO imperialist's military buildup means not only anti-worker "austerity" but rampant anti-immigrant, anti-minority racist terror. Labourite nationalisation schemes necessarily entail support for chauvinist import quotas. Such protectionism - pushed by the likes of miners leader Arthur Scargill - breeds racist hysteria and plays into the hands of British fascists with their slogan of "British jobs for British workers". The combination of

racist chauvinism whipped up by both Labour and Tories, industrial unrest, and the existence of a mass chronically unemployed section of the populace thrown on the scrapheap by Thatcher's redundancies, is a virtual tinderbox for fascist agitation. Fascist organisations thrive in periods of economic decline when the labour movement disrupts the normal functioning of capitalist society but is unable to overthrow it. Under the Wilson/Callaghan government the National Front grew from an insignificant minority into a major menace. Today the fascists are increasingly provocative, particularly in burnt out industrial towns of northern England and Scotland. These scum must be smashed in the egg by trade union/minority mobilisations!

Something very radical is needed to save Britain. What this country needs is a couple of ambitious socialist five-year plans to rebuild its industrial plant, sharply increase labour productivity and overcome the decades-long capitalist rot. A rational reordering of society through proletarian conquest of state power and the institution of a socialist planned economy is the only real alternative to deepening capitalist crisis. Forward to a workers Britain as part of a Socialist United States of Europe! ■

International Women's Day 1988

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No. 34 SPRING 1988

Women and Revolution

Journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League

Return to the Road of Lenin and Trotsky!

How the Bolsheviks Fought for Women's Emancipation

SEE PAGE SIX

Photographed, March 1917. Working women raise banner: 'Comrade Workers and Soldiers, Support Our Demands!'

International Women's Day 1988

American Capitalism: Child Abuse, Inc. 12	The Lindy Chamberlain Case: Anti-Woman Witchhunt in Australia 23
Leprosy and AIDS: Bigots Blame the Victims For Science, Not Superstition! 16	Mexican Women Workers Arise: Class Struggle in the "Global Sweatshop" 32
The Clash Over The Color Purple 18	

Gibraltar...

(Continued from page 12)

dead, it was revealed that the only British Army soldier to have been convicted of murder while on duty in the North since 1969 was not only paroled after serving three years of his life sentence, but furthermore was back on active service in the army.

On 5 March the funeral for IRA veteran Brendan Burns - who was killed with fellow IRA member Brendan Moley by the explosion of their own bomb - turned into another show of British/RUC terror. IRA men in traditional balaclavas and military dress carried Burns' coffin. The RUC charged the funeral procession with batons swinging, injuring an elderly man and three women; the Army mounted a large back-up operation including two Chinook helicopters to ferry soldiers and police to the graveside. Mourners for the slain IRA member conducted the burial service surrounded by riot-gear clad cops and military personnel.

and its supporters. Troops out of Ireland now!

SMASH THE RUC!

The recent appearance of John Stalker's book detailing his investigation into RUC shootings in 1982, his removal from that investigation and Mayhew's announcement that there would be no prosecutions filled the press just before Gibraltar. Stalker, at the time the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester under one James Anderton, went to Northern Ireland in 1984 to investigate the shooting deaths of Eugene Toman, Sean Burns, Gervaise McKerr, Michael Tighe, Seamus Grew and Roddy Carroll and the shooting of Martin McCauley. All had been killed (except McCauley who was seriously wounded) within a month and in each case by the same special RUC "anti-terrorist" unit. They were unarmed; in the hayshed where 17-year-old Tighe was shot to death and 19-year-old McCauley wounded, several old rifles were found, but no ammunition. Early on, Stalker decided he could "not overlook the possibility that revenge

has also uncovered evidence that, persistent denials to the contrary, the RUC's chief constable John Hermon was present at the meeting which launched the attack on Stalker. An incident between Hermon and Stalker at their first meeting sheds some light on the less than warm welcome the Stalker investigation received in Northern Ireland. According to Stalker, Hermon handed him a flattened-out cigarette packet on which was written a family tree on his mother's side: "She is Catholic, and her parents were born in the Irish Republic....It has been suggested that it may have been a subtle way of letting me know I was vulnerable to allegations of Catholic minority bias. I found it very puzzling; I still do" (*Private Eye* no 683, 19 February).

As a senior British police officer, Stalker found out that not only in Ulster, but in London, the actions of the British military, RUC and intelligence forces are held to be above and beyond the reach of the law. Labour "left" Ken Livingstone had a similar observation after being "escorted" out of parliament and barred from the premises for five days after calling government ministers "accomplices to murder" following Mayhew's "no prosecutions" announcement. In an interview with *Midweek* magazine (10 March) Livingstone said: "In other countries this sort of scandal would bring down the government. But here they are so arrogant and the opposition is so weak - that they simply flout the law."

"Weak" though it may be, Labour has historically been worse than no opposition to British imperialism in Northern Ireland; it has served the Crown more loyally than most. It's not just that Kinnock's vile Labour Party was typically swift in its long-playing "open mouth, insert foot" routine and as usual bought everything Thatcher's ministers said from the beginning. The accolades to the SAS from Labour's George Robertson are fully in keeping with the

the SAS ambush in Loughgall, killing eight IRA men and a passing motorist, Labour spokesmen praised the murderous operation. As we wrote at the time: "What can you expect from the party which in government sent in the troops in 1969, which enacted the Prevention of Terrorism Act and unleashed the SAS killers in the mid-1970s, which obscenely told Bobby Sands to go ahead and die in 1981? The hands of Her Majesty's Labour Party are literally dripping with Irish blood" (*Workers Hammer* no 88, May 1987).

NOT ORANGE AGAINST GREEN BUT CLASS AGAINST CLASS

In response to the Gibraltar massacre, the IRA issued a call on the British government to declare war on the Republican movement, noting "Its rules of war include the execution of unarmed volunteers, so let us hear no more hypocrisy about British Government forces acting within the civil law" (*Guardian*, 9 March). Since the SAS ambush at Loughgall, the government's campaign has born the marks of an orchestrated effort to take out leading members with maximal force. Thatcher & Co have played a variety of cards to set the stage, ranging from officially sanctioned cover up of RUC/Army killings to enlisting the cooperation of Dublin's Garda under the Anglo-Irish accord. Particularly after the IRA atrocity at Enniskillen in which eleven civilians were killed, Haughey's cops and troops were unleashed in a joint operation with the RUC to hit Republican strongholds on both sides of the border.

Recent events have produced "tensions" between Dublin and London and the long-sought extradition agreement is again on the ropes. But the reactionary clericalist government of the Southern Republic is up to its neck in repression against the Republican movement. Expressing "unease" over the Gibraltar killings,



SEAN SAVAGE

MAIREAD FARRELL

DANIEL MCCANN

Independent

Regarding the refusal to prosecute RUC officers for known and documented crimes, Attorney General Mayhew announced that while the evidence existed, notably contained in the (suppressed) Stalker report, it was nonetheless not "proper to institute any criminal proceedings". The usual grounds of "national security" were trotted out with monotonous predictability. After the failed appeal in the case of the Birmingham Six frame up, former Master of the Rolls Lord Denning opined that "Wrongfully convicted prisoners should stay in jail rather than be freed and risk a public loss of confidence in the law" (*Observer*, 21 February). From the Birmingham Six to Aidan McAnespie it's open season on Irish people. A revealing article in the *Sunday Telegraph* (31 January) spells out the genocidal "rationale" for state-sponsored terror:

"Yet, what is the fuss all about? In the case of the RUC's alleged 'shoot to kill' policy in the early Eighties, the Government's reasoning was impeccable. From time to time, in the fight against terrorism, policemen are required to bend the law.... Even murder, in the theatre of realism being played out in Ulster, can in certain circumstances become a regrettable misdemeanour, to be covered up and forgotten. The French discovered this melancholy truth in Algeria; the Americans in Vietnam. Britain has simply become re-acquainted with its past."

The immediate, unconditional withdrawal of the British troops is urgently necessary as the Westminster butchers gear up for more atrocities against the Republican movement

killings had taken place" when he learned that four of the six had been implicated by an informant in the planting of a landmine which exploded when a cop car ran over it.

Stalker was also able to determine that false stories had been planted by senior RUC officers after the shootings. Furthermore, in the McCauley/Tighe case, he learned that "An electronic bug, installed by MI5, had been operating, concealed in the rafters, throughout the entire police assault on the barn. McCauley and Tighe had walked into a sophisticated operation that had been camouflaged to look like a chance encounter" (*Stalker*, p 65). The MI5 tape would never be released to Stalker throughout his investigation. During the period in which the RUC killings took place, "Rivalry between MI5 and MI6 over who had responsibility for the province was at its height. When RUC special branch says disingenuously that they were acting as agents for 'other parties', the implication is that if the real truth came out, there would be blood on the carpet in Whitehall as well as RUC headquarters" (*Guardian*, 26 January).

Summarily removed from the investigation after delivering an interim report, recommending charges against at least eight RUC officers, Stalker became the object of a police investigation into his functioning in Manchester on manifestly trumped up charges. Manchester's chief constable then and now - the dangerous nut case Anderton who wants to flog criminals, hates homosexuals and believes he talks to god - was instrumental in the moves against Stalker as was the police inspector responsible for Northern Ireland, Sir Philip Myers. *Private Eye* (no 684, 4 March)



Coffin of Aidan McAnespie - shot to death by British soldier - is carried through Aughnacloy, 23 February.

party's pro-imperialist policies on Ireland. Last spring after the notorious Lord Gibson was blown away by the Provisional IRA, the Labour Party criticised Thatcher's Northern Ireland minister from the right, urging that more troops be sent in and facilities be increased for special forces like the SAS to make "retaliation and capture easier". After

former Dublin foreign minister and joint chairman of the Anglo-Irish conference Peter Barry said: "It is very regrettable that these trained marksmen, which the SAS are, could not have overpowered these three people, or at least shot them in the legs or something, to stop them running away, rather than killing them" (*Guardian*, 9 March). Whatever the

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German Trotskyists honour the "Three L's"

Lenin, Liebknecht and Luxemburg

At the end of January, the Trotskyistische Liga Deutschlands (German sympathising section of the international Spartacist tendency) held meetings in Hamburg and West Berlin to honour the "Three L's" of Bolshevism: V I Lenin, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. These meetings continued the communist tradition of rendering homage to these leaders who died in the month of January (see *Spartacist* [English edition] no 40, Summer 1987).

This marked the first public event of the TLD after its reconstitution following a year during which the majority of the members worked in other sections of the iSt. This expansion of the international experience of the comrades was decided upon after the TLD, along with the rest of the German left, abstained from the protest demonstrations by Jewish groups against the obscene visit by Reagan and Kohl to the SS graves in Bitburg in 1985.

On 27 January, just before the Hamburg and West Berlin meetings, many members and sympathisers of the TLD marched, along with delegations from other iSt sections, in the contingent of the Ligue Trotskyiste de France at a demonstration called by the French Communist Party against the fascist Le Pen. At the same time, the TLD brought out the first issue of its newspaper *Spartakist* after the section's reconstitution, some hundreds of which were sold at German union demonstrations.



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The "Three L's of Bolshevism: revolutionary internationalists.

In East and West Berlin the Stalinists demonstrated in January for the "Two L's" — leaving out Lenin. As Stalin made Lenin into an icon, usurping his authority to cover the Kremlin's betrayal of the world revolution and the internationalism for which the "Three L's" fought, so the East German and West German Stalinists try to portray Luxemburg and Liebknecht as nationalists, parliamentarists and petty-bourgeois pacifists. Thus in West Berlin the march was obscenely dominated by the Social Democracy, who bear res-

ponsibility for the murder of the two German Communist leaders!

The TLD's 31 January meeting in Berlin, where the Spartacusbund of Luxemburg and Liebknecht was founded, took on special significance. It was opened with greetings sent by Oskar Hippe, a veteran socialist now in his 80s who fought in the ranks of the Spartacusbund and later together with Trotsky. More than 30 participants marched with portraits of Luxemburg and Liebknecht to the Landwehrkanal, first to the site where Karl's body was recovered from the

water and then to the bridge where Rosa's dead body was dumped by the murderers.

The speakers for the TLD emphasised the strong connection between the Russian and German revolutions symbolised by the "Three L's". Comrade Silvia Lenz noted that "The sign of a revolutionary is that words and deeds are not two separate things, but rather you live by what you say. On 2 December 1914, Karl Liebknecht was the only Reichstag deputy to vote against war credits: on May Day 1916 Liebknecht came to Berlin from the slaughter and horror of the front and led thousands of workers under the slogan, 'Down with the war! Down with the government!'" Lenz recalled that Liebknecht's first act upon being freed from prison in 1918 was to visit the Soviet embassy to greet his Russian comrades.

Comrade Fred Zierenberg stressed: "Lenin understood that only the international revolution could break the isolation of the Soviet Union. With his last efforts he fought against bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, and internationally he struggled to convey the experience of the Bolshevik Party — to build and educate communist cadres with the capacity to lead the world revolution. The international Spartacist tendency seeks to continue this struggle to build such an international party, a reformed Fourth International, armed with the programme of the 'Three L's'." ■

temporary "strains" between Haughey and Thatcher, the capitalist government in the South is a witting accomplice to imperialism's dirty war in the North.

British imperialism has, however, an insoluble problem in its attempt to make a separate peace with Dublin under the US-brokered Anglo-Irish accord. For one, a lot of people in the South do not look kindly on the whole gamut of British repression in the North. John Stalker is probably the only British cop to be given a hero's welcome in Dublin. At the same time, the fanatical Ulster Unionists have no intention of placating Haughey's Eire by curbing their RUC thugs or the Orange paramilitaries. Westminster might dearly like to wash its hands of the North, let the whole thing go and centre its future dealings with the island on ties with Dublin inside the EEC and NATO. But they are stuck with the consequences of decades of divide-and-rule policies centred on shoring up Protestant ascendancy in the North. Meanwhile, they have tried to bludgeon and terrorise the Catholic community into submission, crushing the Republican paramilitaries and making the "croppies lie down" once more. There is no solution to the brutal quagmire of Ireland, to imperialist oppression and sectarian division, short of a struggle for proletarian power on both sides of the communal divide, on both sides of the border and on both sides of the Irish Sea.

A necessary precondition for solution to the oppression of the Catholic minority in the North, the withdrawal of British imperialism will not by itself, however, resolve the question. What is urgently called for is the construction of a Leninist party which struggles to unite both

Protestant and Catholic workers along class lines through intervention with a revolutionary programme against murderous sectarianism and for an Irish workers republic in a socialist federation of the British Isles. Only this perspective offers a way out of the vicious cycle of communal warfare which reactionary Ulster Loyalism and all forms of "Republicanism" can only perpetuate. Nationalism, Orange or Green, is the bane of proletarian communism which alone can unite the working masses of Ireland against their oppressors, from the British imperial state with its RUC and SAS killer commandos to the Paisleyite Unionist bigots and their deadly hit-men to the "gombeen bourgeoisie" of the Republic, utterly submissive to Britain economically and politically and easily as vicious in their anti-working-class repression.

The liberation of the English, Welsh and Scottish working class is inextricably tied to the struggle of the Irish masses against British imperialism. The increasingly draconian and murderous measures adopted by the Westminster butchers threaten not only Irish people, but the entire population of these isles. Northern Ireland is a testing and training ground for repressive techniques later employed at "home" from the inner city ghettos to the coalfields. And the jealously-guarded privilege of secrecy used so grossly in covering up RUC/Army/MI5 operations in Northern Ireland is of a piece with the Zircon and *Spycatcher* bans, raids and censorship. The Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), now to be enforced "permanently", provides police with vastly enhanced powers of detention, exclusion and expulsion. To weak-kneed opposition by Labour to the PTA today, the Tories respond by labelling the manifestly pro-imperial-

ist Labour Party as IRA sympathisers! This defies all reason — the point is that Thatcher & Co don't care.

Thatcher's bonapartist ambitions will not be easily implemented. The vindictive Iron Lady is widely seen as the blood-drenched ghoul she is: after Gibraltar, large sections of the population must be asking: who's next? It is the duty and in the immediate interests of the organised working-class movement in this country to oppose Britain's terrorism in Northern Ireland, to demand the immediate withdrawal of the troops, the smashing of the PTA, freedom for the victims of British injustice from the H-block prisoners to the Birmingham Six.

Such elementary internationalism necessarily requires a break with the wretched Labour Party and the forging of a Leninist vanguard in Ireland and Britain. In Ireland, the personally courageous and dedicated militants who would otherwise squander their

lives in the service of dead-end Green nationalism can and must be won to the perspective of proletarian revolution. The crimes of British imperialism will impel a new generation to join the Republican cause just as Bloody Sunday galvanised young militants then. Republican nationalism aims for a united *capitalist* Ireland and its acts of terror are not limited to justifiable imperialist/military targets, but include as well acts of indiscriminate terror. No to forcible reunification! Not the IRA's nationalist/reformist strategy but workers revolution on both sides of the Irish Sea will avenge those cut down by the British dogs of war.

Vengeance for Sean Savage, Mairead Farrell, Daniel McCann! Vengeance for Aidan McAnespie! Black all military transport to Northern Ireland! British butchers out of Ireland now! For an Irish Workers Republic within a Socialist Federation of the British Isles! ■

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Troops out of Ireland now!

Gibraltar: cold-blooded murder

Three unarmed IRA members – Sean Savage, Mairead Farrell and Daniel McCann – were assassinated by British SAS forces in Gibraltar on 6 March. Daniel McCann, aged 30, was a leading IRA member. Mairead Farrell, 21, was imprisoned for ten years from 1976-1986 during which time she led protests against the brutal strip searches of Republican prisoners. Her uncle was a Fianna Fail TD (equivalent to MP) in the Republic. Press accounts have said little of 24-year-old Sean Savage; they claim he was an explosives expert "well known" to the police. They are victims of cold-blooded murder by British imperialism.

British intelligence in collaboration with Spanish police had McCann and Savage under surveillance for months. When on Sunday, 6 March, the IRA members parked a car and began to walk toward the border, British agents tracked them on foot and shot them to death. By Monday morning, the government's story – reported as fact in the press – was that the car contained a 500-pound bomb which had been defused by a controlled explosion and that the IRA members were "believed to be heavily armed". However, Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe later announced that same week that the car did not contain a bomb at all and that "those killed were subsequently found not to be carrying arms". He claimed that the three were challenged and shot after they "made movements which led the military personnel operating in support of the Gibraltar police to conclude that their own lives and the lives of others were under threat". An eye witness to the shootings, Mrs Pepi Celecia reported to the contrary that the gunman came up behind two of the IRA members and "without any warning, he shot at them. The woman, who was carrying a large shoulder bag, fell to the ground immediately. The young man, who was in a white tracksuit and running shoes, staggered towards the service station. The man fired at him four or five times more and he collapsed with blood all over the place" (*Guardian*, 8 March). By Wednesday, a car in the Spanish resort of Marbella was

"discovered" supposedly containing 140 pounds of Semtex explosives.

While nothing can be believed from the lying accounts of the bourgeois press, if there is any truth to the story that the three IRA members were considering an attack on the Royal Anglian Regiment, such an act would be utterly defensible from the standpoint of the world working class, unlike the criminal, indiscriminate bombing at Enniskillen. The British military installation on Gibraltar is part of a chain of listening posts operated by GCHQ at Cheltenham; the Rock itself has been tunnelled to house NATO centres and even a mock-up of Belfast sidestreets to provide training for British troops awaiting transfer to Ulster. An IRA attack on these troops would be a defensible attack on British imperialism. Through the heavy tissue of government lies, it emerges that the SAS hit was a planned assassination. As the *Independent* (8 March) reported: "According to a source formerly in a key position at the Army's HQ Northern Ireland, when the SAS is committed there is normally an understanding that no prisoners will be taken." Despite the months of surveillance, a Spanish

security spokesman explained that "all we could have arrested them for was travelling under false passports" (*Independent*, 10 March). So they shot them dead in broad daylight.

The British bourgeoisie did not bother to conceal its glee over this bloody crime. Snapping to attention, Labour's foreign affairs spokesman George Robertson "congratulated the security forces" and went on to howl for more of the same. Indeed this lackey of imperialism was so eager to endorse the Gibraltar massacre that he asked Howe if he could be sure that all those in the "conspiracy" had been shot initially, and despite the fact that it was then known that there was no bomb in the car and the IRA members were unarmed, there was near-unanimous support in the Commons for the government. The lone dissenting voice was that of Eric Heffer. But, in no small part due to their prevarication and endlessly shifting stories, Thatcher & Co have not quite pulled this off.

The press began running queasy editorials like that in the *Guardian* (9 March) which read: "What happened in Gibraltar on Sunday... begins to look rather less simple than it did in the headlines next morning". Columnist Hugo Young followed suit with "second thoughts" on Gibraltar: it "surely marks a perceptible shift in the limits of what has become tolerable, even normal, even – let us describe it properly – the object of enthusiasm and acclaim". Now that public opinion has become increasingly critical, Labour's servile performance isn't winning much praise. A number of Labour MPs have also had "second thoughts" and signed Heffer's motion calling the Gibraltar shootings "tantamount to capital punishment without trial" and demanding a full explanation from the government.

The butcher of the *Belgrano* who sent 300 Argentine sailors to their

graves in icy waters during the Falklands/Malvinas war has hit again in the same spirit of gratuitous bloodlust. Leading up to the SAS assassination, British imperialism's campaign of state terror in Northern Ireland has been escalating steadily and deliberately. Since Gibraltar, the streets of Belfast have been ablaze with burning cars as outraged protesters confront RUC police. With the coffins of the three murdered IRA members returning to Belfast and the 16 March grenade attack on their mourners, killing three, the stage is set for a massive and potentially bloody confrontation.

BRITISH TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND NOW!

All the sanctimonious debates about whether or not the British troops and RUC thugs operate a policy of "shoot to kill" have been answered unequivocally by Gibraltar: shoot to kill is the order of the day. Two weeks to the day before the 6 March assassinations, Aidan McAnespie, a 24-year-old election worker for Sinn Fein, was shot to death by a British soldier at an army checkpoint in Aughnacloy, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. McAnespie was on his way to buy sweets before the start of a local football match. A victim of constant harassment at the Army-RUC checkpoint, he was described a year ago as "Ireland's most searched driver" in a Dublin-based Sunday paper. Only a day before his killing, he was detained by soldiers for about an hour (*Independent*, 23 February). The "official" story: McAnespie was killed when a machine gun at the checkpoint "accidentally" went off and he was hit by a ricochet. Dublin ordered an exhumation and second post-mortem examination to determine from which angle the bullet entered Aidan McAnespie's body. Just after McAnespie was shot

continued on page 10

Sunday Telegraph



Their faces hidden by censor's masks, photo shows SAS hit squad and Gibraltar police removing the bodies of slaughtered IRA members within minutes of the shooting.



Independent

Demonstrators burn vans in West Belfast in protest against the British SAS' murders in Gibraltar. Cops fired plastic bullets into the crowd.