



**No 'phased withdrawal' schemes!**

**Unions must black military transport to Ireland!**



# Troops out now!

Ten years of British army occupation of Northern Ireland -- years of murder, torture and terror against Irish nationalists and the Catholic minority -- will be marked on August 12 by a major national demonstration. But unlike most such demonstrations in Britain -- typically built by Irish Republican nationalists or 'far left' propaganda blocs -- this march is being actively promoted by a cross-class alliance led by politicians from the Liberal Party, junior party of the British bourgeoisie.

The Young Liberals are the chief organisers of the demonstration, which has also attracted the endorsement of various Liberal MPs and lords, Labour politicians and pacifists. Their joint statement calling for the march claims that the British army was sent into Northern Ireland 'to arrest a situation where civil order had broken down' and that 'it was assumed that this intervention would be short term'. It means that the cost of maintaining troops in the Six Counties is a burden on the British taxpayer, and goes on to support Irish Prime Minister Jack Lynch's call to 'bring the Unionists to the bargaining table'. The statement concludes with a vague call on the Tory government to 'commit itself to a policy of withdrawal from Northern Ireland'.

In short, this is a statement of social-patriotic, bourgeois-defeatist sentiment. Far from denouncing British army terror and torture and actively defending the Irish nationalists against imperialism, the statement does not even call for the immediate withdrawal of the troops! It amounts to a plea for a more humane imperialist policy towards Ireland. Yet alongside the Liberals, lords and Labourites, this wretched statement has been signed by the pseudo-revolutionaries of the International Marxist Group (IMG) and Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

The demonstration call is only the latest and most overt manifestation of war-weariness among sections of the British imperialists over the seemingly intractable Irish situation. Last summer a *Daily Mirror* editorial called for a phased withdrawal of troops from Northern Ireland. And following sharp criticisms of Britain's Irish policy by prominent American Democratic Party politicians last April, even the *Economist* has been wondering aloud about 'how to escape from hell' in Ireland.

But bringing the troops out of the Six Coun-

ties has been a taboo subject in Westminster and other British imperialist circles for a long time. Thus the readiness of some Liberal and Labour politicians and important bourgeois publications to even hint at calls for withdrawal underlines the crisis of perspectives which today faces the capitalist class over Ireland.

Imperialism is at a bloody impasse, with literally no perspectives for changing the situation. Army and Royal Ulster Constabulary terror runs rampant, yet their main military opponent, the Provisional IRA, has been able to step up its campaign against imperialist and Northern Ireland state targets significantly over the last year. According to a secret army intelligence document intercepted by the Provos earlier this year, the military High Command sees no prospect of defeating the IRA in the near future.

Meanwhile sectarian divisions between the Protestant and Catholic communities have hardened. The Loyalist Protestants in particular have swung away from the Official Unionists towards Ian Paisley's hard-line right-wing opposition to any power-sharing deals with representatives of the Catholic minority.

## 'Concern' in Washington

After meeting the former Labour Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Roy Mason, last December, US Senator Daniel Moynihan came away shaking his head, saying that he was 'absolutely dazed' at Mason's intention of doing nothing 'about Northern Ireland except keeping the British there' (*Hibernia*, 26 April). The following St Patrick's Day Moynihan joined with fellow Democratic Party bigshots Ted Kennedy, Tip O'Neill and Hugh Carey to issue a statement which condemned the British government for 'human rights' violations in the North, and called on Westminster to adopt the solution of a united Ireland if 'the Protestant majority persists in its unwillingness to entertain reasonable proposals for sharing power with the Catholic minority'.

New York State Governor Carey went one further, calling for economic sanctions to be applied against Britain if the government failed to demonstrate 'some willingness to initiate moves towards peace' (*Financial Times*, 4 May).

Since then O'Neill has called for a ban on the sale of arms to the RUC, while Moynihan announced on BBC TV that he wanted to see Ireland united and warned Britain not to suppose that he or his co-thinkers would be 'endlessly patient'.

The US imperialists have no realistic concrete proposals of their own for resolving the conflict. However they do have a strong belief that the present British course is unhealthy for international capitalist stability. They are seriously concerned that Britain's lack of any coherent policy for Ireland could have repercussions for Western 'security'.

Thousands of British soldiers remain bogged down in a no-win situation in the North, undercutting NATO strength in West Germany, and garnering the West a bad 'human rights' reputation in the process. Moreover, sections of American -- and now increasingly British -- imperialist opinion are worried about the effects on army morale of the high rate of casualties, desertions and decisions by NCOs not to re-enlist during the last decade. The US imperialists are only too aware of their own recent experience of a protracted losing war in Indochina, and the effects of that filthy escapade on both army strength and popular sentiment in the United States.

But instead of cautiously weighing up the warnings coming from the Number One imperialists, spokesmen for both major British parties reacted to the criticisms by going into paroxysms of jingoist rage. O'Neill had clearly struck a raw nerve.

## Partition, Loyalism and imperialism

From the standpoint of its overall interests, British imperialism has for some time found the existence of the border in Ireland a barrier to lucrative exploitation of the island as a whole. The years since World War II in particular have witnessed a steady decline in the traditional mainstays of Northern Ireland's industry -- linen and shipbuilding -- and the further opening of the southern Republic to exploitation by foreign capital.

For over half a century Britain has financed

*continued on page 6*

# Secret Service thugs grab US union militant

In an outrageous attack on the rights of the US trade union movement, Secret Service thugs from Jimmy Carter's personal entourage of bodyguards last month invaded the annual convention of the Communication Workers of America (CWA) and physically abducted a union official and elected delegate, Jane Margolis. This is the first known time that the Secret Service has invaded a union convention and seized a union officer.

The incident took place just one hour before the US president was due to address the union gathering in Detroit on July 16. Without warning, agents in the company of local Detroit police surrounded Margolis, 32, a member of the executive board of CWA Local 9410, and in front of hundreds of stunned and outraged delegates dragged her protesting from the convention floor to an adjoining room where she was handcuffed and interrogated. Infuriated delegates immediately rushed to the microphones to protest this criminal assault. But the mikes were abruptly turned off and CWA president Glenn Watts told delegates to 'ignore the disruption at the back of the hall'.

Outside the convention hall the Secret Service agents manhandled Margolis, threatening to hold her incommunicado for days on the basis of 'reports' from unidentified 'sources' which claimed that she was threatening the life of the president. After thirty-five minutes she was released without any further explanation, but was subjected to continued surveillance even after she returned to the convention floor.

Back in time for the question period, Margolis joined the twenty delegates lined up at the microphones who were supposed to be able to ask Carter questions. Although she was fifteenth in line, she got no opportunity to make her speech, as the peanut boss decided to curtail the discussion after the twelfth speaker. As Detroit reporters euphemistically commented on television that night, 'it appeared to us, to the reporters, as if somebody was trying to be silenced'.

With Carter's popularity rating lower than Richard Nixon's ever was, it is not surprising that the president's PR men and bodyguards wanted at all costs to avoid a confrontation with a militant union delegate who was prepared to stand up and denounce his attacks on the working class. Margolis spoke out against Carter at the CWA convention last year, denouncing his use of the slave-labour Taft-Hartley Act to



Secret Service thugs grab Jane Margolis at CWA convention

break the miners' strike. This year, in the morning session before her arrest, Margolis tried to put a motion that 'the CWA not allow itself to be used as a platform for the anti-labor, strikebreaking policies of Carter'. She was not recognised by the chair, but intended to raise this point in her afternoon contribution when the Secret Service grabbed her.

Margolis, a supporter of the Spartacist League/US, is a spokesman for the Militant Action Caucus (MAC), a San Francisco-based oppositional grouping inside the union. The MAC has a long record of fighting for a class-struggle programme within the half-a-million-strong CWA which organises telephone workers across the United States. MAC has consistently opposed government intervention into the unions, and has fought for the right of local branches to strike without the sanction of the national leadership (which almost never gives it). It has fought for a struggle against speed-ups, forced transfers,

lay-offs and Carter's wage freeze. In contrast to the union bureaucrats' policy of sucking up to the Democrats for favours, MAC calls for 'not a dime, not a vote to the strikebreaking Democrats and Republicans', and struggles instead for a workers party to fight for a workers government.

With inflation running at 14 per cent and wage 'guidelines' trying to limit pay rises to 7 per cent, American workers feel the erosion of their living standards quite keenly. And this summer, the petrol crisis -- widely and correctly felt to be manufactured by the government and the oil companies -- has created a well-nigh impossible situation for workers in a society in which tens of millions must rely on their cars to get to their jobs. CWA members certainly have many other reasons to hate Carter, who has threatened them with injunctions if they strike.

In abducting and shutting up Margolis, Carter and his aides showed that they were not only afraid of a militant CWA member, but also of the wider public, watching the convention speech on television. In his nationwide TV address the previous night, the millionaire president had said, 'I'm listening to the voices of Americans'. But the voices he listened to at the convention were hand-picked, and Margolis was, in the words of the *San Francisco Examiner* 'One critic Carter didn't hear'.

That Secret Service agents could come into a union meeting in order to gag all criticism of the government is a gross attack on elementary trade union rights which must be strongly resisted, and underlines graphically the importance of the principle: No state intervention in the labour movement! However, the gross thuggery displayed by Carter's agents can do little to revive his flagging credibility.

At the level of gut reaction, American workers know who is responsible for the oil crisis making their lives an intolerable hell. And as they watch Carter and his personal heavies whizz around the country in Lear jets and air-conditioned limousines, as they listen while he arrests union militants and calls on workers to 'start praying', their hatred for this born-again imperialist robber will grow. With a capitalist recession threatening to drive down their living standards even further, the demands raised by class-struggle oppositions like MAC will find a powerful response: Expropriate the oil giants! Break with the Democrats and form a workers party pledged to the struggle for a workers government! ■

## letter

### The Labour way of dying

10 July 1979

Dear Comrades,

I was interested to read in your article ('Why the I-CL is Moving Right' in *Spartacist Britain*, July 1979) repeated references to the 'reformist Chartists', who 'wheel and deal among the careerists who populate the lower echelons of the Labour Party bureaucracy'. Whilst I agree broadly with your description, I feel that you have misunderstood the ideological basis for their rightward evolution -- especially when you talk about 'Chartists and other social democrats'. A careful perusal of their press reveals fascination with the Gramsci cult, a positive appraisal of Eurocommunism, paeans of praise for 'Red Bologna', and other marked traits to be found in common or garden Stalinism. If you add to this a remark made by one of their theorists at a public debate in Islington that *Marxism Today* was an excellent journal that should be widely disseminated in the labour movement, and that the same gentleman put forward an orientation towards the ILP, where most of the CPGB's Labour fellow travellers seem to be concentrated at the moment, the picture comes even sharper

into focus. Finally, we might add that a spokesman of the majority at the conference expressed the hope that a ban on discussion of the Russian Revolution be part of the group's future standing orders (shades of the CPSU in 1925), and that they have now circulated all the members of the Minority (nearly half of their late conference) with a statement asking them to endorse the expulsion of one of their comrades, or share his fate.

These features bear little resemblance to the familiar mores and behaviour of social democracy. But they are part of the ideological and organisational baggage of Stalinism. The Chartist group as a whole, of which the present writer is ashamed to admit that he was a founder member, and the originator of its printed newspaper, provides the rest of the left with an object lesson. If you empty Marxism of the Trotskyist critique of Stalinism, you are unable to advance it any further, and are automatically put back into the twenties and thirties. Those who are incapable of learning from history are condemned to relive it.

Fraternally,  
Richard Stephenson

*Spartacist Britain* replies: Comrade Stephenson generally concurs with our description of the Chartist grouping today as reformist, but

argues that an evolution towards Stalinism rather than an integration into social democracy was responsible for their degeneration. We strongly disagree.

Labour-loyalism -- in the form of a fundamental commitment to life as an organic faction of the Labour Party -- is the key to understanding the history of the Chartist tendency. Their current flirtation with Eurocommunism and their

*continued on page 7*

## SPARTACIST BRITAIN

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## SL/IMG exchange:

# Who defends the Iranian left?

We reprint below an exchange of letters between the Spartacist League and the International Marxist Group (IMG) on the defence of the Iranian left. Fifteen supporters of the IMG's Iranian fraternal group, the Hezb-e Kargar-e Sosialist (Socialist Workers Party -- HKS) along with supporters of the Fedayeen guerrillas, militant workers and other leftists remain in the prisons of Khomeini's reactionary Islamic Republic. Yet the IMG has shown *criminal negligence* in doing next to nothing to defend these militants. Subsequent to the two pickets of Iran Air mentioned in the SL letter, a third mobilisation to protest the arrests was called for July 21 -- and again only a half-dozen IMGers attended alongside a contingent of over 20 Spartacist supporters.

IMG leader Steve Potter claims that petty organisational barriers have not obstructed the defence of the endangered militants, and that 'all socialist organisations and individuals are welcome to join the defence-activities'. Given that the defence activities organised by the IMG so far would have been an utter shambles had it not been for the presence of the Spartacist League on the picket lines, it is hardly surprising that the IMG must now welcome our participation. Yet last winter, when we sought to demonstrate against the shah's bloody rule, Potter and his IMG cronies made a 'united front'



Who defends the HKS? The IMG contingent led by Steve Potter (left) or Spartacist League (right)?

with the cops to exclude us from the marches, saying that our slogan 'Down with the shah! Down with the mullahs!' was 'reactionary'. We still say 'Down with the mullahs!' -- are we still 'reactionaries', comrades?

Moreover, Potter's sanctimonious 'welcome' is far from shared with his comrades elsewhere in the United Secretariat (USec). Internationally, the USec has been so intent on painting the fanatical Iranian clergy in democratic colours that it has preferred to split the defence of the HKS rather than risk the slightest association with proletarian opposition to the mullahs' rule. The USec's American partners, the Socialist Workers Party, physically excluded the Spartacist League/US from an HKS defence demonstration on June 22, then followed up this sectarian atrocity with a barrage of Stalinist-style lies about an alleged 'assault' on the picket. And the Australian USec group abandoned its own picket lines and tried to sabotage defence motions passed in student unions rather than be seen with the advocates of revolutionary opposition to Khomeini (see *Spartacist Britain* no 13, July 1979, for details).

Steve Potter additionally advises us that the Campaign for Solidarity with Iran (CSI) is the appropriate 'sort of united front campaign' within which to conduct defence activity. Yet Comrade Potter knows well that the CSI has never done *anything* about defending the Iranian left against Khomeini. The initial theory behind this rotten propaganda bloc -- the successor to the Campaign Against Repression in Iran -- was that with the shah gone, the main task would be to defend the 'Iranian revolution' against imperialism. In any case, the CSI has hardly been heard of -- let alone seen -- since its foundation last April. If this is the 'appropri-

ate body', Comrade Potter, where were its banners and placards on the Iran Air pickets? You should know, given that the IMG has three members on the CSI executive.

Astonishingly, with his own comrades lying in jail, Potter has the further gall to say that Islamic reaction is not rampant in Iran, and that -- all evidence to the contrary -- the working class and national minorities are making 'big advances'. This must be heartening news for the workers whose strikes have been outlawed, the women who have been flogged, the homosexuals who have been shot and the national minorities who have been butchered by the ex-imperial (and now Islamic) army. To make this astounding claim, the international experts of Upper Street have to resort to wholesale fabrication and omission of the facts. Thus *Socialist Challenge* consciously avoided any mention of the Fedayeen supporters imprisoned after the Kurdish uprising last March, and waited a full month before doing anything about their own HKS comrades. Why?

Having cheered on the mullahs and Khomeini (now described in passing as 'pro-capitalist') as champions of a 'democratic revolution', the IMG must now continue to deny and distort the facts about Iran. Having chanted 'Allah akhbar' ('God is great') with the ayatollahs last February, IMG National Secretary Brian Grogan is no doubt embarrassed to discover today that god

is in fact not so great.

But while Allah is clearly not about to come to the aid of the prisoners of Islam in Iran, it is equally clear that the USec isn't going to either. Ineptly organised pickets, and *Socialist Challenge* leaflets which assure the Imam that the HKS is not 'subversive'; 'model telegrams' to the ayatollahs' Islamic Council which the IMG suggests should read 'We friends of the Iranian Revolution [:] call for the release of the 15 HKS members jailed in Ahwaz' -- these are emphatically *not* the methods of proletarian

internationalists.

With every day, the burning need for militant united defence of the HKS, Fedayeen and other Iranian leftists now under the gun becomes more clear. Yet the IMG, like the rest of the USec, is grovelling on its knees before its 'friend' Khomeini, and refuses to stand up even to fight for the lives of its own comrades. Stop the sectarianism and passivity -- For a united-front defence of the Iranian left!

17 July 1979

Central Committee  
International Marxist Group

Dear Comrades,

We are writing to express again our urgent desire to help organise united-front activities in defence of the Iranian left -- and in particular of your arrested comrades of the HKS who face possible torture and even execution at the hands of the Khomeini regime. Your feeble defence effort on behalf of the imprisoned HKS militants underlines the pressing need for militant, co-ordinated *united-front* defence mobilisations, which could potentially contribute to saving the lives of the endangered comrades of the HKS, Fedayeen and other Iranian leftists.

So far your HKS defence activities have consisted of two small pickets of Iran Air. We mobilised 20 comrades for the first picket on July 7; you managed to bring out all of half-a-dozen. In the subsequent *Socialist Challenge* you lamented your 'disappointing turnout' and urged 'all Socialist Challenge supporters' to attend another picket on July 14. Upon seeing this call for another demonstration, we immedi-

## TELEGRAM

Islamic Revolutionary Council  
Teheran, Iran

We vigorously protest the arrest and detention in Ahwaz of members of the Hezb-e Kargar-e Sosialist and the widespread savage attacks on the left and labour movement, national and religious minorities, women, homosexuals and others whose fight for the most basic democratic rights runs counter to your reactionary purpose. Today you are using the army, prisons and torture camps of the butcher shah in your attacks on the working class and oppressed. Stop repression of Iranian left. Free the HKS prisoners, supporters of the Fedayeen and all victims of Islamic reaction.

Spartacist League/Britain  
PO Box 185, London WC1H 8JE, England  
30 July 1979

ately contacted you to propose that the picket be properly organised and built as a united-front mobilisation, around three slogans:

- (1) Stop repression of the Iranian left!
- (2) Free the imprisoned HKS and Fedayeen supporters!
- (3) Stop Khomeini's government attacks on the national minorities and women of Iran!

Comrade Steve Potter rejected this proposal on your behalf, stating that the IMG wished to continue running its own defence activities. So, come the following Saturday's demonstration, a grand total of a dozen IMG members and sympathisers appeared -- and again only the presence of a 30-strong Spartacist contingent saved the picket from being a total shambles.

Again on the July 14 picket we proposed to Comrade Potter the organising of a united-front mobilisation, which could also involve other left and labour organisations who wish to defend the Iranian left against Khomeini's persecution. And again the answer was no.

Comrades: we ask you once again not to put petty organisational barriers in the way of the necessary militant united defence actions which could mean the difference between life and death for your own comrades. We renew our proposal for a united-front demonstration(s) or other such defence activity, and ask you to contact us rapidly to make concrete arrangements. Our phone number is 278 2232.

Faternally,

John Masters  
for the Spartacist League Central Committee  
cc. Workers Socialist League, International-  
Communist League, Workers Power

23 July 1979

Spartacist League

Dear Comrades,

Thank you for your letter of 17 July.

We do not put 'petty organisational barriers' in the way of our defence activities for the militants suffering persecution in Iran. All socialist organisations and individuals are welcome to join the defence activities which we have initiated on this question.

At the same time we do not share your view that Iran is in the grip of Islamic reaction. We consider that the working class and the national minorities are making big advances despite the opposition of the pro-capitalist Khomeini-Bazargan regime. We therefore consider the sort of united front campaign that is appropriate is that which is organised by the Campaign for Solidarity with Iran (which can be contacted c/o PO Box 82, London E2).

Within this sort of solidarity activity we will continue to organise defence activities on behalf of our comrades in Iran and the other militants of the far left who face repression from the Iranian government and 'Imam' Committees.

Yours,

Steve Potter for IMG Political Bureau



# I-CL expels Trotskyist

Eyes firmly fixed on supposed big-time opportunities in the Labour Party, the centrist International-Communist League (I-CL) expelled Trotskyist oppositionist Brian Smith on June 30. Comrade Smith was charged at the I-CL national conference with being a Spartacist League 'agent' -- an allegation designed simply to stop discussion on his far-reaching criticisms of the I-CL leadership. In this issue of *Spartacist Britain* we are reprinting a document submitted by Comrade Smith to the I-CL pre-conference discussion, 'The SCLV is not an Accident' [opposite], along with an open letter to members and supporters of the I-CL written following his bureaucratic expulsion [below].

Over the past year and a half the I-CL (which politically supports the Workers Action [WA] tendency) has undertaken a sharp right turn. WA supporters have immersed themselves in reformist Labour Party work, becoming the best foot-sloggers for aspiring 'left' Labour bureaucrats like Ernie Roberts, Ted Knight and Ken Livingstone in the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV).

The I-CL leadership's enthusiasm for the SCLV, its paper *Socialist Organiser* (SO) and its projected continuation, the Socialist Labour Alliance (SLA), has provoked oppositional or semi-oppositional grumblings from members throughout the country. Last spring a resolution from the Leicester branch attacked 'a number of articles in *Workers Action* or *Socialist Organiser*, which relate to the Labour "Lefts", the Labour government and the election in general' for being 'more suited to the opportunists of the IMG and the reformists of the Militant than a tendency like WA which is supposedly going to build a revolutionary current in the Labour Party'.

Before the conference, an aggressively anti-SCLV document by I-CL member Cale was distributed to the membership. Indicating the widespread mood of cynicism over the much-trumpeted SCLV, Cale recounted how regular *Workers Action* readers reacted upon seeing an issue of *Socialist Organiser*: 'Oh, no, not that thing, when's *Workers Action* coming out again?' He called for WA to 'publicly criticise the SCLV for its tailing of pseudo-lefts, its softness on the

record of the Labour government, its lack of democracy, its vote-cadging, and its pandering to workers' illusions in the LP', and demanded that the organisation 'drop any ideas about the SLA'.

But for all their sharp language, Cale's criticisms could not form the basis for a consistent fight against I-CL opportunism. Not only were they limited to the question of the SCLV, but they even accepted the fundamental premise of this reformist vehicle: that a principled campaign could have been constructed to fight 'socialistically' for Labour in the last election. At root Cale's position, like that of sundry other semi-oppositionists throughout the country, was a call for a return to the old I-CL, which was more verbally radical but still wedded to opportunist propaganda blocs and economist trade unionism. And at the conference, the leadership managed to cajole him into withdrawing his document altogether!

For those who accept the I-CL's fundamental conception -- that it is permissible (even necessary) to dilute or abandon programmatic principles to win influence -- the leadership has an unassailable answer. Political Committee member Martin Thomas noted in a pre-conference document, 'The SCLV and SO: Results and Prospects in our Orientation to Political Reformism', that the I-CL has always wanted to build 'looser movements' which raise 'the key elements of a transitional programme as they are tactically relevant' -- classically a reformist rank-and-file movement in the trade unions. To be sure, very little of the programme has ever been found 'tactically relevant'.

Cale and most other oppositionists had always accepted this opportunist precept in I-CL-supported trade union work -- they simply blanched when it came to applying it to the Labour Party. Moreover, while I-CL-supported projects in the unions have inevitably sputtered to nowhere, the SCLV has apparently got somewhere, at least in London. Thus the full flower of I-CL opportunism has blossomed, and the organisation has been pulled more and more rightward.

Ever since the disastrous collapse of its fusion with the Workers Power grouping three

years ago -- which cut the organisation's membership drastically -- the I-CL has been searching desperately for some new way forward. Now the Sean Matgamna/Thomas duo think they have it. They have junked the I-CL's former left-wing posture in order to set the organisation hard on its new task of 'renovating the labour movement' through open-ended deep entrism. Thomas writes of the SCLV:

'This work is not conditional on the appearance of a big left-reformist upsurge within the LP. Such an upsurge is indeed not certain. But it is not improbable; and by developing work round SO we will put ourselves in a better position to relate to it.

'... it is not possible to set a term to the work of building a left-wing rank and file opposition in the LP. It is not a question of a quick "raid".' (ibid)

So Matgamna and Thomas march the ranks ever onward, deeper into the camp of Roberts, Benn and Callaghan. And anyone who -- like Comrade Smith -- argues for a Trotskyist programme and perspective as opposed to Labour-loyal opportunism must be bureaucratically tossed aside. ■



I-CL hatchet man Martin Thomas

Spartacist Britain

## Open letter to members and supporters of the I-CL

Stoke-on-Trent  
20 July 1979

Comrades,

On 30 June I was expelled from the I-CL by the national conference, charged with being a Spartacist League 'agent'. The expulsion was in direct violation of the I-CL constitution, which demands two weeks notice for the expulsion of a full member while I was given only one. Moreover the leadership never even allowed me a hearing at the conference: they prevented me from attending the session which voted to expel me and thus denied me any opportunity to defend myself and my politics before the membership. This letter contains the case that the Political Committee bureaucrats refused to let me argue at the conference.

The leadership's 'charges' really amounted to an accusation that I had deep *political differences* with the line of the I-CL. This was hardly a secret! As any member of the Stoke branch can attest, I had been making left-wing criticisms of some of the I-CL's positions ever since I came into contact with the organisation in Stoke in 1976. I continued to raise my criticisms (especially around the SCLV) both as a contact and internally after I joined the organisation in November 1978. As a result of my experience in the organisation I began to systematise these criticisms, and came to the conclusion that the leadership's politics were thoroughly *centrist*, not revolutionary.

Before the leadership shut me up with their

bureaucratic suspension I fought for my positions in the pre-conference discussion -- against voting Labour in the last elections, against the I-CL's gross opportunism on the SCLV and ANL. I then produced a document, 'The SCLV is not an Accident', in order to argue for a Trotskyist alternative to the politics of the leadership.

Matgamna and Thomas responded like typical bureaucrats. One week before the conference they suspended me. Thomas came up to the Stoke branch meeting on 26 June and made the charge -- known to be ludicrous by everyone else in the room -- that I was a 'Spartacist plant' (ie not a genuine oppositionist). Then the centrist cowards of the PC made sure I was kept hidden away in a cafe while they talked the conference into expelling me from the organisation. The whole shoddy exercise was a textbook example of how centrists will do *anything* to avoid a forthright political confrontation with anyone who fights for a revolutionary programme and perspective.

The leadership argued openly that I should be expelled because I had political positions which were identical to those of the Spartacists -- in their phrase I was an 'agent' for SL politics. But I never denied that the political positions I was advancing were also upheld by the Spartacists. Since when has a *Marxist* leadership expelled oppositionists solely because they hold positions similar to those of an opponent group? Matgamna likes to pretend that he is a Cannonite. Well, every I-CL member

should look at how Cannon's SWP dealt with political oppositionists:

'6. No measures are to be taken against any party member because of the views expressed in the party discussion.' ('Supplementary Resolution on the Organisation Question', *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, p 240)

The record on both sides is clear. I sought to fight the rotten political line of the leadership. At a time when many members of the I-CL were sharply questioning and criticising the SCLV, I put forward a systematic critique of this reformist project and showed how it was of a piece with the whole opportunist methodology of the leadership. Matgamna & Co were obviously terrified that the many comrades who were deeply worried by the orientation of the organisation might get a perspective and an overall revolutionary alternative from what I put forward. So they had me run out of the organisation.

My years in the Chartists between 1970 and 1974 proved decisively to me that Labour-loyalism is not the way to build a revolutionary party. With its championing of the SCLV perspective, the I-CL leadership is taking the organisation down the same road as the Chartists. The answer is not a return to the mythical 'good old days' of the economist Workers Fight/early I-CL tradition, but an open uncompromising fight for the Trotskyist programme.

I am currently working and discussing with the Spartacist League with the intention of becoming a member. I urge every politically serious member and supporter of the I-CL to study and discuss the politics of the organisation which fights Labourism instead of advertising it; which offered a programme for proletarian power in Iran, and not for Islamic reaction; which acts as the British section of a genuinely democratic-centralist international Trotskyist tendency: the Spartacist League.

For the rebirth of the Fourth International! Yours fraternally,  
Brian Smith

# The SCLV is not an accident

This document was presented by Brian Smith for publication in the I-CL's internal bulletin, before his suspension and expulsion from the organisation.

The task of communists is to construct a party capable of leading the proletariat to the conquest of power internationally. Such a party must stand at all times upon a genuinely independent working-class programme. However, the I-CL leadership with its liquidationist positions and perspectives will never build a Leninist party. The wretched SCLV is only the newest and worst example of the leadership's consistent willingness to throw out programmatic principles in the hope of short-term organisational gain. The I-CL must reject the leadership's opportunist methods in favour of organising as a fighting propaganda group which aims to bring together the nucleus of the vanguard party through a clear struggle for the Transitional Programme. This means fighting programmatically against the fake-revolutionary groups -- not accommodating to them politically -- in order to win their best supporters to Trotskyism. In the trade unions it means a struggle to create opposition groups on a full revolutionary programme -- not economist rank-and-fileism.

## The SCLV

The SCLV is not a united front, which is a limited agreement between revolutionaries and non-revolutionaries for common action. It is a rotten alliance which promotes minimal, Labourite politics. Its programme was consciously adapted to the requirements of the Labour-Loyal Chartists and Labour Party careerists. From the start the SCLV boosted the 'big-name' reformists who have sponsored the campaign.

The SCLV and the projected SLA [Socialist Labour Alliance] are both completely unprincipled and opportunist. They cannot be compared with revolutionary entry work in the Labour Party which would have the ultimate aim of splitting the party and winning a section of it to the full communist programme and to the revolutionary vanguard. There must be a complete break with the SCLV.

## Critical support

The components of the SCLV were certainly united on one thing in the pre-election period -- the need to get out the biggest possible Labour vote. At a time when the Labour government was openly seeking a mandate to attack the unions and workers' living standards, and when many militant workers who had been betrayed again and again by the Callaghan government were questioning the bureaucrats' call to vote Labour once more, the I-CL was nevertheless working away to return the Callaghan strikebreakers to power. This 'critical support' to Labour was in fact a gross capitulation to the dominance of the social democrats over the working class.

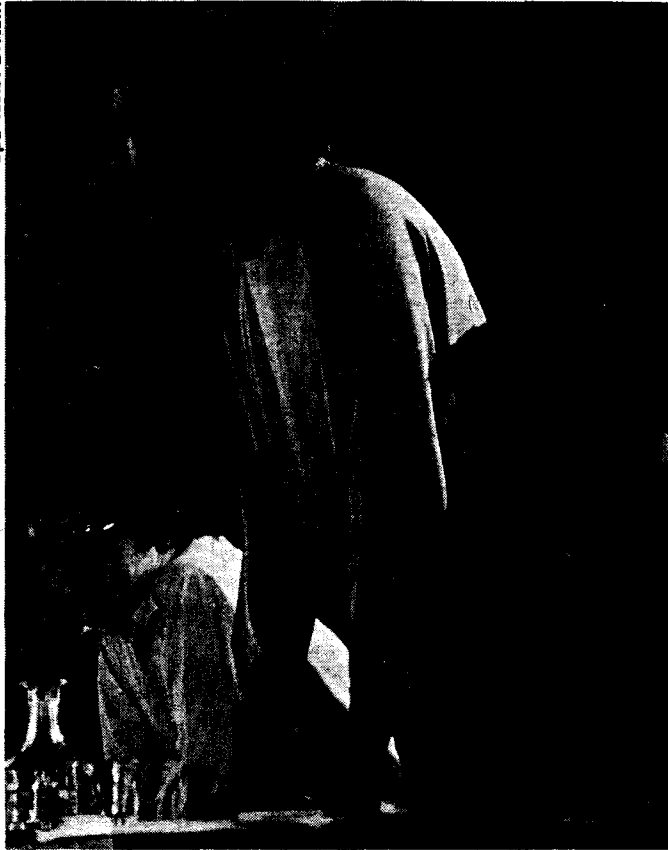
Critical support is a tactic, and by no means the only way to expose the Labour Party's treacherous character. In the 1979 elections to call for a vote to Labour, adding a few 'socialist' criticisms of the government, was to help reinforce the hold of the Labour traitors over the class. A campaign for no vote to the Labour Party, for workers to draw the lessons of the years of open Labour class collaboration and betrayal, was the correct Trotskyist position for the last election.

During the Lib-Lab pact the leadership also gave 'critical support' to Labour candidates. This support for representatives of a popular-front-type coalition was a breach of revolutionary principle. The Marxist vanguard must fight for the political independence of the proletariat from its class enemies. To give any form of political support to a working-class party in a bourgeois coalition like the Lib-Lab pact (or the French Union of the Left) is necessarily to endorse direct class collaboration, strengthening the reformist leadership's ability to betray. The I-CL should have demanded a break with the coalition and the Social Contract attacks on the working class as a precondition to even the most critical support.

## Russian question

Although it is particularly right-wing, the

SCLV strategy is not an isolated mistake, but is in line with the I-CL leadership's long history of championing false 'unity' at the expense of programme. It was not difficult for the leadership to sanction the fusion with WP [Workers Power] in which fundamental programmatic differ-



Livingstone (speaking) evicts squatters, Knight (with cigar) implements Tory cuts. What next for SCLV leaders?

ences, particularly on the question of the defence of the Soviet Union, were deemed irrelevant. Reflecting the parochialism characteristic of the leadership, comrade Matgama observed at the time that for British revolutionaries the Russian question was a 'tenth rate question'. For instance, the leadership has always been proud of its abstentionist position on the EEC. But the EEC is an imperialist alliance designed to strengthen European capitalism against the USSR and the deformed workers states. It is an economic adjunct to the anti-Soviet NATO military alliance, and therefore has to be opposed in principle by Marxists.

For Trotskyists the attitude of an organisation to the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states must be a fundamental question. Revolutionaries have a principled responsibility to defend them against imperialism and fight for political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracies. This is not a question which Marxists can play down or agree to differ on, having their differences aired publicly, as provided for in the WP fusion.

## The ANL

In the ANL there was the same desire to abandon programme in the interests of spurious unity with lefts and others around a minimum programme pitched marginally to the left of the ANL leadership. In this the I-CL was a party not just to an unprincipled propaganda bloc but to working within a popular frontist formation which played a decisive role in derailing effective opposition to fascism. The ANL should have been given no support -- critical or otherwise -- and instead the I-CL should have fought for a strategy of mobilising the organised working class -- centering on the need for workers defence guards based in the unions -- to smash the fascists.

## Ireland

The leadership's 'critical' friendliness towards the ANL has indicated a fatal willingness to abandon a perspective of struggle based on the working class. The same dismissal of the proletariat as the only consistent and effective champion of the oppressed can be seen in its position on Ireland.

Of course the first thing that must be said about Ireland is 'British troops out now', without any conditions. But that on its own is not a perspective for socialism in Ireland. Internationalists have a responsibility to outline

a programme for proletarian revolution in Ireland which can address the complex national and communal question in the North. It is not a matter of being for the 'self-determination of the Irish people'. This slogan obliterates the fact that there is a distinct and powerful Protestant community in the North which does not see itself as part of the 'Irish people' in any sense. The slogan is a democratic-sounding translation of the republican programme -- for the bourgeois unification of Ireland, forcibly against the will of the Protestants, if necessary. Such a position works against the vital task of splitting the Protestant workers away from the Loyalist reactionaries -- something which cannot be achieved by offering *anschluss* into the southern republic with its clerical constitution.

The slogan 'Solidarity with the IRA' sums up the leadership's programme for Ireland -- tail Catholic nationalism. It is imperative that revolutionaries defend the IRA against British state attacks. But we can in no sense solidarise with sectarian terror directed against Protestant workers, or indiscriminate bombings of English pubs and the London tube. A Trotskyist party in the North has to win the unique authority of opposing British imperialism whilst fighting against Loyalist and republican sectarian terror. The slogan of anti-imperialist, anti-sectarian workers defence must be raised as an affirmation of this perspective. The slogans and posture of Irish nationalism have no place in the work of a communist organisation. We must stand not for a 'united [ie gombeen] Irish state' but for a workers republic in a socialist federation of the British Isles.

## Iran

On this crucial question the I-CL leadership has followed in the footsteps of the IMG and SWP, adopting a grossly tailist perspective which tried to give Khomeini's reactionary movement a revolutionary content. *WA* [Workers Action] printed uncritically an interview with the ayatollah, and praised his 'programme of democratic reforms' (*WA* 121). And today the I-CL wants to prevent the 'reversal' of a 'revolution' which was not a victory for the Iranian workers and peasants. Instead, the Islamic Republic has attacked striking oil workers, butchered national minorities, trampled blatantly over women's most basic rights, executed homosexuals, and prepared a general witchhunt against the left.

It is a telling condemnation of the I-CL that today it tries to put a 'left' gloss on senile reformism and clerical reaction. The path trod by the organisation thus differs in no fundamental way from the short-cut-to-influence politics of the United Secretariat [USFI]. Little wonder that Matgama stated in 1976 'There is a sort of family relationship between the I-CL and IMG'.

Like the USFI the leadership is Pabloite. They pretend to stand on the Trotskyist programme, but in practice downplay and abandon many of its central aspects in the search for elusive organisational success. They repeatedly obliterate the decisive role of the Marxist organisation, armed with an independent proletarian programme, in the struggle for socialist revolution. Communists do not act as the left conscience of the United Secretariat, as the I-CL has historically done. They do not participate in unprincipled international conglomerates like the Necessary International Initiative. No, the aim must be to politically defeat the Pabloites and other traitors to Trotskyism, in order to re-create a genuinely - Trotskyist democratic-centralist Fourth International.

Smith (Stoke branch)  
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# Troops out now...

(Continued from page 1)

and supported partition, and in order to keep the working class divided has systematically played on the Protestant community's fears that a Catholic-dominated united Ireland would mean 'Rome rule' and the oppression of the Protestants. In response, the Protestants have historically allied themselves with British imperialism in order to defend what they see as their threatened existence. Now, when imperialism no longer feels a strategic commitment to the maintenance of 'a Protestant government for a Protestant people' in the North, and would prefer a settlement which would allow it to withdraw from direct political responsibility on the island, it is stuck with the consequences of its past policy.

In the years leading up to 1969, Britain sought to prune back and legislate away some of the more egregiously discriminatory aspects of the Northern Ireland statelet. But the fact that Westminster was trying to dismantle -- even in a piecemeal fashion -- any of the sectarian machine it had helped create in the first place, was enough to provoke massive resistance from die-hard Unionists. Thus when the Civil Rights movement began in the Catholic ghettos in late 1968 sections of the Orange Order, particularly in rural areas, reacted in the way they had been taught. For the next year Civil Rights marchers were stoned and attacked wherever they assembled. In the vanguard of the Orange mobs were the thugs of the B-Specials and the RUC.

The Catholics, victims of long-standing discrimination and increasingly frustrated at the hollowness of Britain's pseudo-reforms, began to fight back, as they had often done in the past. The crisis came to a head in August 1969 after Protestant thugs, again led by the hated B-Specials and RUC, tried to storm the Bogside area of Derry. For two days these would-be pogromists tried to force their way into the area, only to be met by unprecedented resistance which effectively kept them out. In Belfast, Orange mobs rampaged down the Falls Road, burning over 150 houses, until they were halted by the handful of armed IRA volunteers in the area and by the barricades thrown up by local residents.

## The troops arrive

It was in this context that the British government decided to send in the troops, in response to a cry for assistance from the Northern Ireland Unionist regime. Army intervention was presented by the government as an attempt to defend the beleaguered Catholics from an all-out Protestant assault -- and certainly in both Derry and Belfast many Catholic workers initially welcomed the troops, looking on them as a barrier between themselves and their Loyalist attackers.

But it wasn't just the workers of the area, caught up in the fighting, who breathed a sigh of relief. Prominent leftists, notably Bernadette Devlin and the International Socialists (forerunners of the SWP), utterly capitulated to Catholic illusions and hailed the army takeover. *Socialist Worker* (11 September 1969) claimed that the presence of the troops would provide a necessary 'breathing space'. And although the IMG pointed out that the army would not protect the Catholics, it refused to call outright for troop withdrawal. The reality was that there was no 'breathing space', as anyone with even a shred of revolutionary outlook would have recognised at the time. Defence of the oppressive status quo and maintenance of capitalist order -- not defence of a besieged ghetto -- were the real reasons for the army intervention.

## Growth of the Provisionals

In the reaction to the army harassment which began soon afterwards, the Catholics of the North started to arm themselves. They increasingly looked to the Provisional IRA -- which had been formed after a split from the established Republican movement in the direction of a more nationalist-militarist policy -- both to defend them against the attacks of the army and Loyalist groups and to prosecute a campaign to smash the sectarian Unionist state structure. But like all previous petty-bourgeois nationalist movements in Ireland, the Provos merely used the Catholic masses as a passive pedestal on which to conduct their militarist operations, and dismissed the Protestant workers as an unbreakable

part of an Orange monolith that had to be smashed. Their political programme was the attainment of a united bourgeois Ireland.

To achieve their goal the Provos launched a military campaign which was aimed not only against symbols and representatives of oppression like the army and police, but also against civilian targets like pubs, cafes and supermarkets -- and sometimes directly against innocent Protestant workers. While the campaign did stretch the army to the limit, the manifest ineffectiveness of its indiscriminate terror tactics and wilful sectarianism, along with the Provos' overall political absenteeism, helped to fritter away the support of the Catholic people. They were left easy prey for the suave politicians of the Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), while the Protestant workers were driven ever closer to their Loyalist exploiters. As a consequence, the communal divisions already existing within the working

IMG willingness to tail bourgeois defeatists found clear expression in last year's August 17 issue of *Socialist Challenge*. Reprinting the *Daily Mirror's* front-page 'bring them home' call, the IMG hailed it as a 'tremendous tribute to the continuing resistance of the Irish people to British rule'. The *Mirror's* 'tribute' called for Ulster independence and gradual troop withdrawal over five years as best policy for 'defeat of the gunmen'. IMG asked, will CP 'follow suit'?

But the next British Government should declare that on a date five years from now Ulster will be given its independence and that British forces, finance and administration will depart.

accepting a 'solution' which they see threatening their separate identity are doomed to failure.

## For a proletarian perspective

The Provisionals' bankruptcy as a force capable of destroying imperialist rule in Ireland may today seem evident. But throughout the early 1970s they were uncritically hailed by groups like the IMG as Ireland's answer to Che Guevara -- a guerrillaist force riding the crest of a revolutionary 'dynamic' which would automatically propel them into overthrowing capitalism and establishing another Cuba. 'Victory to the IRA' cried the starry-eyed Pabloites, wilfully blind to the Provos' bourgeois programme and criminal sectarianism.

Since then, the IMG and its Mandelite mentors in the United Secretariat have made many a 'self-criticism', and with their new-found

**ULSTER: Mirror Comment**  
**Bring home the troops**

The time has come in the chance. Withdrawal by Britain would be a cowardly act, some say. On the contrary, it would be courageous. It would not mean defeat BY the gunmen, but it could lead to defeat OF the gunmen. A government of Irishmen is more likely to achieve that than any British one. The cost to Northern Ireland of nine years of emergency...

class were deepened by the Provos' strategy and tactics.

The Provisionals' petty-bourgeois nationalism naturally extended to a view of the 'British people' as a classless monolith. Thus they had no perspective whatsoever for winning the class support of British proletarians in the fight against imperialism in Ireland. Instead they mounted bombing campaigns in Britain to put pressure on the imperialist bourgeoisie, none of which ever distinguished between attacks on imperialist targets and indefensible random terror against innocent British workers. Thus the Provos' British campaigns only served to weld the British proletariat closer to its 'own' bourgeoisie on the question of Ireland.

Prior to 1972, the IRA's main slogan was 'Smash Stormont', the seat of government in Northern Ireland. By implication, they were willing to see it replaced by direct imperialist rule. And indeed when the Tories did suspend Stormont in March 1972, the Provos and their camp-followers on the British left hailed this as a great victory. Yet all that was involved was taking governmental control out of the hands of one set of thugs and placing it in the hands of another.

The suspension of Stormont was part of imperialism's overall strategy of shearing the Orange state of its more patently discriminatory features and thereby facilitating rapprochement with the Catholic South. Throughout 1973-74 efforts were made to draw together so-called 'middle ground' politicians in a hollow parliamentarist bid to resolve the situation to imperialism's satisfaction and to 'bring the two communities together'.

This led to the creation of the Assembly and the power-sharing Executive, in which leaders of the SDLP joined ministerial hands with Brian Faulkner's Unionist Party, and together supervised continued imperialist exploitation and repression of the workers. In recognition of the North's 'special relationship' with the South, a toothless 'Council of Ireland' was set up to pursue co-operation on 'cross-border matters'.

But in a matter of weeks the whole elaborate structure came tumbling down, toppled by a Loyalist-led general strike which called for the restoration of Stormont and an end to what was seen as an attempt to submerge the Protestant community in an all-Ireland Catholic republic. Imperialist plans for the North were set back, and the lesson was forcefully rammed home that all attempts to railroad the socially-powerful and determined Protestant working class into

wisdom have junked the old cheerleading for guerrillaism in favour of more 'respectable' pursuits. Now the IMG seeks allies in the editorial offices of the *Daily Mirror* and the headquarters of the Young Liberals. It uncritically champions the International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland, a civil-libertarian campaign which fails even to call for the withdrawal of British troops. And when it came to the assassination of Airey Neave by Republican terrorists earlier this year, the IMG squirmed and wriggled, trying at all costs to avoid standing for the unconditional defence against state repression of those who placed the bomb.

But one thing which has remained constant in the IMG's politics -- in common with virtually all of the British left -- is a dismissal of the Protestant working class as irredeemably reactionary, some kind of labour-aristocratic agency of imperialism (whose wages and living conditions are much worse than those of most British workers!). In contrast, for revolutionaries, breaking the strategically-powerful Protestant proletariat from its Loyalist masters and forging proletarian unity is a strategic necessity in the struggle for workers rule throughout Ireland. History has repeatedly shown that despite their present backward consciousness, Protestant workers' class interests are diametrically opposed to those of imperialism and the Orange bourgeoisie. To take only the most recent dramatic example, last winter the British army -- the same army which daily enforces discrimination against Catholics -- was called up to smash the predominantly Protestant Northern Ireland tanker drivers strike.

However class unity cannot be forged by avoiding the national question in favour of economist 'bread and butter' issues. The workers in their separate ghettos will only be broken from the nationalist/communist hatreds which keep them at each other's throats by a party which has as central planks of its programme opposition to imperialism, to the sectarian Orange statelet and to the Green nationalist goal of forcibly incorporating the Protestants into a united capitalist Ireland.

Such a party must struggle for class, not communal, unity. When Loyalist or Republican forces engage in criminal communal violence, it must fight for integrated anti-sectarian, anti-imperialist workers militias to defend the working people of both communities against such terror. It must advance a programme of transitional demands aimed at ending the poverty and mass unemployment which blight both communities in the



North -- not a fight between Protestant and Catholic for decent jobs and housing, but work sharing on full pay, a programme of socially-useful public works and an end to all discrimination in employment and housing.

Lacking a programme which can forge anti-imperialist proletarian unity in Ireland, the IMG and other British pseudo-revolutionaries are reduced either to tailing Green nationalism or to capitulating before imperialism. They turn the absolutely essential call for 'troops out now' into the alpha and omega of Marxist politics for Ireland -- and now even reduce this demand to a vague call for a 'commitment to withdrawal' whenever they want to propitiate the Liberals. The IMG and SWP are certainly not going to fight for concrete acts of working-class solidarity with those fighting imperialism in Ireland. Yet if Liverpool dockers blacked all military transport to Northern Ireland for even one day, that would be worth a hundred foot-slogs from Speakers Corner to the Embankment!

British imperialism is at its bloody impasse in Ireland precisely because there is no capitalist solution to the Irish question -- short of a massive bloodbath and repression that would make the present imperialist terror seem like a tea party. Only a revolutionary party which has the programme and determination to raze the communal barriers between working people to the ground can show the way forward for the working class against capitalism and end the centuries-long imperialist domination of the country. Troops out now! Not Orange against Green but class against class! For an Irish workers republic in a socialist federation of the British Isles! ■

## Labour way...

(Continued from page 2)

toying with the ILP are quite in keeping with the appetites of 'left' Labourite social democrats. Likewise, the Chartists' fond gaze at 'Red Bologna' has less to do with Stalinism than with their own dream of a 'Red Lambeth' which they will help administer. Their eager participation in the wretched Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory is further illustration of the fact that these parliamentary cretins are no Stalinists but a species of Labour Party swamp-dweller who want nothing to do with either the October Revolution, or any of today's deformed/degenerated workers states.

With the Chartists now consumed with crackpot 'sexual politics' and unashamed anti-Bolshevism (and barely clinging to organisational existence), it is hard to imagine that they were once a politically serious tendency which subjectively sought to uphold the programme of Trotskyism. Yet they began life in 1970 as a grouping in search of a proletarian orientation in opposition to the then-popular armchair guerrillism, petty-bourgeois sectoralism and 'third worldist' nationalist enthusiasms of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat (USec), and its British section the International Marxist Group (IMG).

The fusion of the two components which produced the small Chartist nucleus was marked from the outset by a common commitment to permanent entrism in the Labour Party. The part of the tendency (including Comrade Stephenson) which came from the IMG was disgusted with the worst aspects of that group's student-vanguardist fantasies about 'red bases' -- a line

advocated even during the massive working class upsurge of May 1968 and after. The other wing was led by now-expelled minority leader Chris Knight who had been in the Militant tendency of Ted Grant. His group was immersed in the Socialist Charter project, a pressure group allied to the Tribunites which had been started inside the Labour Party. The Knight strand were never to break with the Labourite perspective of Militant, and this intersected the ex-IMG comrades' hankering for the earlier entrism orientation of the British USec section. In 1971, as part of a discussion with the Spartacist tendency, the Chartists explained what they meant by 'entrism':

'It should never be confused with the liquidation or submersion often practised in the past by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, or with the short-term "smash and grab" raid (in reality a sort of faction work) as with the Socialist Labour League in the Labour Party Young Socialists in 1960-64.' (reprinted in *Chartist International* no 1, January-March 1974)

But Leninist-Trotskyist entries are precisely the sort of short-term faction fights so denounced, aimed at winning leftward-moving tendencies to the revolutionary programme, like the Trotskyists' 'French turn' entries of the 1930s. The Chartists' theoretical justification for revisionism on this question rested on the false claim that work in the Labour Party is essentially identical to work in the trade unions (which Marxists do not, of course, enter to 'raid'). Extending this further, they argued that the Labour Party was really like a soviet!

But while the tendency argued for this erroneous viewpoint, they also held certain orthodox-seeming positions which -- particularly when viewed from afar -- marked them out in the international pseudo-Trotskyist swamp. One of the key documents of the group was Comrade Stephenson's own 'The Fourth International and Our Attitude Towards It'. Despite a pronounced work-erism (and concomitant aversion to reorganising the Fourth International through tough programmatic fights leading to splits and fusions) the document was a serious attempt to come to terms with the split in the post-war Fourth International which we reprinted in our cadre education series.

Comrade Stephenson now regrets the founding of the Chartists. We regret instead that the group, or a section of its cadre, did not succeed in transcending its centrist weaknesses, clearly characteristic of the chummy Labourite milieu of its birth, and go forward to authentic Trotskyism. One evident aspect of this was their break away from sharp, serious discussions with our tendency, and the firm labelling of our principled Marxism as 'sectarianism'.

The formative period of the Chartists was that of a rising line of class struggle against the 1970-74 Heath government. The next recruits of the early nucleus were mostly left-wing militants working for social-democratic or trade union organisations and raw Labourite youth. In the absence of a cohesive revolutionary worldview, these accretions accentuated the tendency's Labour-loyalism, while regroupments with fragments from the International Socialists reinforced its heterogeneity.

Rejecting a fighting propaganda perspective, the organisation immediately began to develop a number of feverish get-rich-quick schemes. For example, they projected that work within the London Co-operative Society could be quickly turned into a seat on the Labour Party NEC, and, most importantly, undertook long-term work in the Socialist Charter, culminating in the farcical takeover of its empty shell.

But it was the profound class battles of 1974 which thoroughly and totally disoriented the small group. Whereas a Marxist organisation armed with a correct programme and tactical line could have made great strides at this time, the Chartists' dizzy leadership insisted that the insurrection was at hand and called for a 'joint command of the revolutionary organisations' (*Chartist*, January 1974)! Entrenched in Labour Party wards, it perforce looked to the Labour Party 'soviet' as the instrument to take the power. Not surprisingly, this line caused the loss of many demoralised and disgusted cadres who exited baffled and burnt. A new leadership clique ousted Knight, a line-up which prefigured the present split. The pull of everyday run-of-the-mill Labourism was also taking its toll. Chartists became local Labour councillors, and then as often as not didn't see much point in being Chartists any more.

Reeling from the disorientation of 1974, the Chartists were then struck down by the subsequent relative quiescence of the class struggle. As the group staggered from pillar to

post, the only thing which stayed constant was a commitment to the Labour Party. In 1975, they enthused over the prospect of a section of the Portuguese officer corps leading the masses to socialist revolution, a position which put them back in the company of the IMG. With the latter expressing a temporary interest in Labour Party work, this congruence of positions led to a brief rapprochement. Invitations to internal IMG functions followed, and a possible fusion was even mooted.

But the honeymoon soon ended, and the Chartists began to outdo the IMG and Ernest Mandel himself in efforts to 'junk the old Trotskyism'. As the lull in class struggle continued, the rot set in further, and a total abandonment of confidence in the revolutionary capacity of the working class took place. Mesmerised by the grip of reformism on the working class, a majority wing emerged, convinced that something had gone terribly wrong with the Marxist tradition somewhere way back, and that it was necessary to go back to the drawing board and do lots of 'theoretical work'.

Not surprisingly, the descent into the mire produced a few protesting gurgles, but the sharp majority/minority division which has now led to an effective split is cliquish and personalist, not programmatic in character. The Knight-led minority may have protested against the majority's too-joyous shouts of anti-Bolshevik 'creativity', but that was all. Moreover, for proof that they could come up with just as bizarre 'new thinking' as the majority, get this from an article by Chris Knight in *Critique of Anthropology* III, 12 (summer 1978):

'The working class is the first materially-productive class in the history of class society to have acquired the power of the strike. It is the first such class to acquire the power to say "No". When it understands the identity between this "No" and the "No" which women have been trying to say for the past several thousand years, a fusion of forces will take place to generate a power which no force on earth will be able to stop.'

After their stint of thinking was over, the Chartist leadership unveiled their new design: a 'theoretical' journal which would be less readable than previous publications, and a sectoralist orientation to those forces which the strictly economist Militant tendency doesn't dare touch -- 'Irish republicans, gay activists, socialist feminists, Anti Nazi League supporters and so on' (*Chartist*, March-April 1979). To use Engels' phrase, as fine a 'pauper's broth of eclecticism' as you're ever likely to see.

Comrade Stephenson's argument that Stalinist ideology is the real culprit rests on two points: the Chartists' bureaucratic internal life, and their current fascination with Eurocommunism and its trappings. But his statement that violations of internal democratic norms are characteristic of Stalinist groups but 'bear little resemblance to the familiar mores and behaviour of social democracy' is a Stalinophobic whitewash of the profoundly anti-democratic social-democratic parties.

As for Eurocommunism, the Chartists are interested in precisely the social-patriotic aspects of the drift by certain CPs away from Moscow towards their 'own' bourgeoisies. Anyone who can bear to read the revamped *Chartist* will discover beneath the misuse of Gramsci and kinship with Poulantzas a search for some new 'theory' to justify working within the bourgeois state. If the Chartists now express an admiration for *Marxism Today* it is not because of that journal's studied neglect of the fate of the Left Opposition in Stalin's Russia or the CPGB's role in defending that slaughter, but because it reflects the progressive *social-democratisation* of the party, and its penchant for junking even formal Leninism in favour of 'creative' reformism.

Comrade Stephenson concludes by commenting that those who are incapable of learning from history are condemned to relive it. The Chartist road will not be trodden identically by every group which adopts the same permanent entry perspective. (Indeed, it would be difficult to replicate the unique twists and turns of this outfit.) But the end will be the same -- an end first reached by Militant, then by the Chartists, and now lying before their SCLV partners, Workers Action. Comrade Stephenson's attempted explanation obscures the essential unifying factor behind the history of the Chartists. We are pleased to bring it to light and to show all those whose first desire is to be an organic faction of the Labour Party what the future holds. ■

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## Khomeini's army butchers Arab workers

First it was the women in the streets of Teheran resisting the imposition of the veil. Then it was pitched battles with national minorities fighting Persian chauvinism. Since late May, Ayatollah Khomeini and his mullahs have faced the most potentially explosive challenge to their six months of chaotic and bloodthirsty rule, as the Arab minority in the southern province of Khuzistan has taken up the gun. Arab workers in the southwest are among the most oppressed sectors of the proletariat, but their strategic position in the refineries, docks and oil fields places them at the jugular of the Iranian economy.

Arab nationalists, demanding the right to elect their own governor and a larger share of the oil revenues, occupied civic buildings. Dock workers shut down one of the country's major ports, Khorramshar. The publication of the proposed constitution of the Islamic 'Republic', which institutionalises the same vicious oppression of national minorities that the Pahlavi regime perpetrated, even brought the local Muslim hierarchy into opposition. But Khomeini, like the shah before him, has shown that he is prepared to unleash bloody terror in order to maintain labour discipline and control of the vital oil supplies.

On May 30 the elite 'Guardians of the Revolution' stormed the occupied buildings, and fighting raged for three days in Khorramshar. The aftermath saw as many as 200 dead and the imprisonment of hundreds of Arabs, including oil and steel workers' leaders, as well as supporters of the Iranian Socialist Workers Party (HKS -- see story page 3). And ever since, Khuzistan province has seethed under military occupation. Khomeini branded those involved in the fighting as 'counterrevolutionaries' and threatened them with the same treatment that the shah's former officials got: execution.

### 'Same soldiers who fought for the shah'

Admiral Ahmad Mahdani, the military governor, claimed that the Arab militants were 'masked leftists in the service of international imperialism'. But the Arab workers knew better, noting bitterly that they had been defeated 'by the same soldiers who fought for the shah' (*New York Times*, 31 May).

Khomeini was able to deliver a major blow against the Arab nationalists, who were less well armed than the Kurds who have battled the army in northwestern Iran. But since June the province has reeled under a wave of oil pipeline sabotage, railway bombings and occasional sniper attack. The Arabs have not laid down their arms, and in any event their most powerful weapon is their ability to choke off Iranian oil production.

The Abadan oil workers threatened strike action and the Khorramshar dock workers were on strike even as tens of thousands of unemployed fought with Khomeini's militia. What the reactionary Muslim rulers fear most of all in this volatile situation is a proletarian upsurge which is not under the control of any of the ayatollahs -- one that strikes out in the interests of all the workers and oppressed against clerical reaction, and defends the national rights of all the non-Persian minorities, amounting to three-fifths of the total population.

Yet the Iranian left *still* continues to build suicidal illusions in the ayatollahs. The Stalinist Tudeh Party, which has some strength among the oil workers, continues to give whole-



Ayatollah's gunmen keep Khuzistan under Persian domination

hearted support to Khomeini and his Persian-chauvinist Islamic regime. As for the fake-Trotskyist HKS, it has backed the Arab struggle, but in a manner which combines gutless capitulation to the mullahs with a bourgeois-nationalist programme for the Arab masses.

When Admiral Mahdani threatened that 'our fist will smash the heads of all those who try to separate any part of Iran', the HKS protested that 'separatism' was a red herring. Their paper *Kargar* uncritically quoted an 'Arab representative' who defined the right of self-determination -- which for Marxists must mean the right to form a separate state -- as merely 'having power in the region' (*Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, 11 June).

In the same article the HKS uncritically listed a series of nationalist demands put forward by Arab leaders, all of which are explicitly linked to a capitalist theocratic Iran: 'Arab representatives in the constituent assembly', 'establishment of Arab administrative bodies for solving problems on the basis of Islamic law [!]', 'a fair share [!] of oil revenues for the people of Khuzestan', and incredibly, 'a role for Arabs in the national army and the training of Arab officers in the military academies' -- ie a role in the officer caste of the same bourgeois, Persian-chauvinist army that has been slaughtering the Arab people!!

### Workers must rule Iran

Contrary to this treacherous reformism, Marxists must advance demands which genuinely meet the democratic aspirations of Iran's Arab minority and of the Kurds, Turkomans and other oppressed nationalities -- including their right to national self-determination. We recognise however that these democratic demands will not be satisfied under Khomeini's rule, but only by a workers revolution that sweeps away the power of the mosque.

From the earliest days of their victory the mullahs had two tasks which they loudly proclaimed: destroy the shah's personal torture clique and destroy the left. They have gone ahead with the former with relative ease -- and

revolutionaries are glad to see these butchers go, even if the guns that shoot them are the guns of Islamic reaction, not of the worker and peasant masses. But the left is armed and cannot be dealt with so easily. This fact, along with the struggles of the national minorities, has been key in slowing down the consolidation of an effective instrument of mass terror to be used against the workers.

The miserable left-wing supporters of the mullahs' victory take this as a sign that all is basically well in Iran, as the 'revolution' continues to 'unfold'. But the consolidation of a new Islamic army is taking place *over the corpses of the national minorities*. The executions of 'adulterers', homosexuals and prostitutes, the floggings for 'moral crimes', new press censorship, even the banning of music, the cinema and mixed bathing -- all graphically illustrate the reactionary character of a regime that is day-by-day entrenching itself more solidly in power. The promulgation of a new law making strikes, strike agitation, 'divisive acts' and political demonstrations punishable by *death*, and the wave of strong-arm attacks by Muslim fanatics on non-Islamic critics of the regime have laid the basis for a sweeping assault on the left.

Revolutionaries must urgently demand the organisation of a broad united-front defence based on the power of the working class to stop the bloodbath now looming in Iran. The militant working-class strike action that was decisive in bringing down the shah must now be wielded against Khomeini as well.

The Spartacist League warned from the outset that the rule of the mullahs would mean the continued oppression of the national minorities, barbaric segregation and oppression for women and the savage suppression of the left and workers movement. We alone drew the necessary conclusion: the urgent need for a mobilisation of the proletariat independent of and against the mullahs. Now these Islamic fanatics are in power and the left and the oppressed masses are paying the price. For workers revolution against Islamic reaction! For an Iranian Trotskyist party!

--adapted from *Australasian Spartacist* no 65, July 1979