

## All out! Join the steel strikers!

# Steelmen: Stay out and win!



**Sack Sirs -  
Elect a national  
strike committee!**

**TUC: Call a  
general strike now!**

Thirteen weeks into the longest national strike this country has seen in decades, the choice confronting 150,000 steel workers has been made clear as day. They can submit to the tireless efforts of Bill Sirs & Co to get them back through the gates of BSC by Easter on the basis of a humiliating arbitrated settlement; or they can push forward, sweep Sirs aside and detonate an explosion throughout the working class which will rock this country to its foundations. From the first day this strike has had the potential and the urgent necessity to burst the confines of a narrow wage struggle against one particularly bankrupt employer. A general strike is not pie-in-the-sky. It is the road to victory. And it is posed more sharply as a concrete opportunity today, even in the eleventh hour of Sirs' sellout attempts, than it has been at any point in the last thirteen weeks of class war. *Steel workers: Stay out and win!*

On March 20, Sirs and the representatives of the ten other striking unions announced agreement with BSC management to constitute a three-man 'committee of inquiry' to arrange an arbitrated settlement. The union negotiators have already capitulated to virtually *all* of British Steel's key demands -- sweeping redundancies, local productivity deals, countless strings. All that is left to this phoney pro-management committee is to pick a figure between 10 and 19 per cent which the bureaucrats can then sell to the ranks as the 'best' they could get. BSC has already agreed to accept its findings, while the

craft union leaders have followed suit and the TGWU has left it up to the branches.

This committee is a sellout from the word go. BSC knows it, Sirs knows it, the strikers know it. The negotiators -- on both sides -- even tried to push through a return to work before the results are announced, the company offering a sickly 'sweetener' of an immediate 10 per cent rise. The craft union officials wanted to go for it, openly expressing opposition to the ISTC/NUB decision to stay out until the committee releases its findings. And the only reason Sirs and NUB head Hector Smith didn't try that one is that they would have had an insurrection on their hands. The ISTC National Executive was split even on calling the inquiry, with some members demanding an extension of the strike. South Yorkshire strike leaders say they will throw up pickets round the steel plants if Sirs tries to get them back to work for less than 20 per cent.

For many strike activists the last thirteen weeks have been thirteen weeks away from their families, thirteen weeks of travelling around the country from one picket assignment to the next, thirteen weeks on 'subsistence rations, sleeping on makeshift beds. They have been forced to devote as much of their effort and energy to frustrating the endless backstabbing manoeuvres of their so-called leaders as fighting the employers, while the employers and their government have countered with a solid front. In recent weeks the picket lines have dwindled and much of the private sector has gone back. Endless hours and valuable opportunities have been wasted because no authoritative central strike leadership has sprung up

to organise this strike while Sirs attempts to *disorganise* it. But the sentiment remains: *they must keep on fighting!* The posters say it: '20 per cent! No surrender!' One striker from Consett -- one of 800 who lobbied the TUC General Council on March 26 -- captured well the determination: 'Not one of us will go through those gates until we get 20 per cent. Eighty per cent of Consett workers feel this way.' The defiance has not been broken: 'We will *march* through those gates' swore one Sheffield strike committee member.

*Make it a victory march!* A victory is ripe for the taking. The CBI announced last week -- the very week in which the bureaucrats were frantically driving towards their sellout -- that 25 per cent of production throughout industry had been affected by the strike. The bosses are being hurt.

And the strike is spreading! It should *never* have been *just* a steel strike; now it is not. On March 21, every ship in the port of Liverpool was left stranded as more than 6500 dockers walked off the job after a hundred of them were ordered to load a shipment of blacked steel or

*continued on page 10*



Liverpool: 4000 dockers vote for national dock strike in solidarity with steelmen



**What has Scargill done  
for the steelmen? ... 4**

## A steel strike notebook

# 'Moss, we want a general strike'

The following strike notebook is based on reports by Spartacist League supporters from the strike fronts in South Yorkshire and elsewhere in the country.

**March 3:** About forty steel workers blockade the entrance to Transport House, demanding to see TGWU general secretary Moss Evans about the continual scabbing by transport union drivers on the strike. Another full-time official, Tom Crispin, agrees to see a delegation and claims he can't do anything about the situation. One T&G striker responds angrily, 'We pay your wages, Crispin!' Crispin scoffingly hands him a coin and sneers, 'Here's tuppence, that discharges my debt to you.' The angry strikers then set up a picket line and stop lorries approaching the building. Finally, Moss Evans is forced to come down from his Executive meeting, and the steel workers demand he issue instructions to stop the scabbing. A Sheffield striker adds, 'Moss, we want a general strike.' Evans mutters some excuses and evasions, and vaguely promises some action.

**March 7:** The TGWU finally 'instructs' its drivers not to cross picket lines -- nine weeks into the strike, and two days after the TUC has directly intervened in an attempt to sell it out. Still, at strike headquarters in South Yorkshire there is great excitement; if they picket key factories and the TGWU men follow directives, the country would grind to a halt.

**March 9:** About 100,000 workers march through London on the TUC's Sunday outing against the Employment Bill. The ISTC contingent is by far the most militant and spirited, and Len Murray almost gets booed off the stage by steel workers and Yorkshire miners shouting 'General Strike'.

Most 'far left' organisations restrict their intervention to paper sales. The Socialist Workers Party has a contingent, but refuses to call for a general strike. In contrast, Spartacist League supporters march behind a banner reading 'Victory to the steelworkers -- General strike now!' Militant SL chants include 'Miners, dockers, car workers -- join the steelmen now!' and more than 500 copies of *Spartacist Britain* are sold on the demonstration.

**March 10:** Strikers fan out across the country to step up the picketing -- and start to discover just how hollow the TGWU's instructions are. About 20 arrive in Oxford to picket BL



Sheffield strikers block deliveries at Transport House, March 3: 'This is a picket line; this place is under seige!'

Cowley. Several students appear to help man the picket lines, as do Spartacist supporters and a couple of militant seamen visiting from the United States. But there are nowhere near enough men to cover all the gates, the picket lines are disorganised -- and the vast majority of both Cowley workers and TGWU drivers either don't see them or cross anyway. One lorry driver carrying pressed steel is even waved across by a CP convenor inside the gates! The picketers get on the phone to complain about the whole situation to the local TGWU chief official, David Buckle, who claims he's received no instructions from Transport House.

But in Sheffield 400 engineering stewards vote to instruct their members not to cross picket lines. Soon 8000 engineering workers in 16 plants are out, with many joining the steel workers on the picket lines. The steel strikers are jubilant: *finally* the strike is spreading.

**March 12:** The South Yorkshire strike committee tries to throw up another mass picket around Hadfields, one month after 2000 strikers and Yorkshire miners shut it down in the Valentines Day Massacre. Except this time there are perhaps 700 steel workers and no miners, and they are trapped and completely outmanoeuvred by an equal number of police who make dozens of arrests. It

is announced on the picket bus arriving from Stocksbridge that there will be a march to the local BSC headquarters *after* the picket, implying that the local strike leaders are more interested in blowing off steam and getting publicity than actually shutting down the scab plant. After the mass arrests, the strikers are marched around Sheffield and Rotherham for a few hours, then finally sent off home with nothing accomplished.

**March 14:** The 29 District Committee of the engineering unions Confed, heavily influenced by the CP, votes to call their members back to work across the steel workers' picket lines. Inside Sheffield strike headquarters militants are despondent and quietly angry. One complains, 'You can't win if they keep sliding backwards.'

Meanwhile in Manchester, 70 representatives of local strike committees meet and demand that there be no more negotiations until BSC puts 20 per cent without strings on the table. But the meeting does not raise concrete demands on the union leaders -- the BL convenors, engineering officials, Arthur Scargill -- to stop their stalling and sabotage and strike alongside the steel workers.

**March 23:** A week later 10,000 dock and ancillary workers in Liverpool *have* come out on strike after being threatened with a lockout for refusing to handle steel. A mass meeting of 4000 resolves to stay out and votes all-but-unanimously to call for a national dock strike. But the bureaucrats do not attempt to coordinate the strike with the steel workers, trying instead to reduce it to a single-issue grievance. South Yorkshire strike committee leader Keith Jones' speech to the meeting contains only bombast about 'uplifted hearts' -- and *no* rank-and-file steel workers have been brought to lobby this key gathering, potentially crucial to turning the whole strike towards victory. A *Spartacist Britain* supplement, calling for co-ordinating the strikes and spreading them through the labour movement, is taken and read intently inside the meeting by a good half of the workers.

**March 24:** After two weeks of 24-hour picketing, the plants on Ford's giant Dagenham estate are still running as strongly as ever. Every picket knows that the plants have been topping production targets since day one of the strike, thanks to scab steel pouring through the company's private dock -- with the consent of the national ISTC and TGWU and convenors in the plants. Even now, Sirs' man in charge of the picketing, Brian Connolly, has made a deal with the convenors -- including CP supporter Dan Connors -- to allow steel to be brought out of the estate, cut at another factory, and then taken back in! A picket from Jarrow has two words for this arrangement: 'It stinks!'

**March 26:** Eight hundred strikers lobby the TUC General Council meeting at Congress House. Bill Sirs comes out for the dinner break; a Welsh striker challenges him about why the strike is winding down, why the anger and militancy in South Wales and elsewhere has been dissipated. Sirs mutters some excuses about divisions between the unions and how 'the mood has changed' -- as if he had nothing to do with it at all! Eventually the strikers drift away to the pubs, or onto coaches bound for home. Tomorrow Sirs' 'Committee of Inquiry' is scheduled to begin its hearings. ■

## Reinstate Brian Molyneux and Joe Herbertson!



Brian Molyneux addresses 1979 ISTC Annual Delegate Conference

After BSC made its provocative and insulting 2 per cent wage offer and announced plans for mass redundancies last December, it didn't wait for the strike to attack union militants. No doubt emboldened by Leyland's Sir Michael Edwardes -- who on November 19 sacked Longbridge convenor Derek Robinson -- BSC management on December 5 dismissed Brian Molyneux, ISTC branch secretary at the Stocksbridge smelting shop. Molyneux, a member of the South Yorkshire Strike Committee, told *Spartacist Britain* what happened:

'The so-called "reason" was that I attended a meeting at the plant without the company's permission.... I'm convenor for about 6000 members of this union and I feel that my members need a representative at these meetings. So [the manager] took a decision with the industrial relations manager to dismiss me there and then....'

Molyneux's branch walked out as soon as he was sacked, and voted unanimously to stay out until he was re-instated. The local strike was still continuing when the national dispute began.

Molyneux also discussed another BSC sacking, that of Joe Herbertson, ISTC branch secretary at the Hoyle Street laboratories and editor of the Socialist Workers Party's *Real Steel News*. Herbertson was victimised after a long and bitter but unsuccessful union campaign against closures at the laboratories. Molyneux commented:

'I understand that our union is going to take it to a higher court. But BSC have made Joe a financial offer, which Joe has obviously turned down. They can't sack militants like that and get away with it....'

And they mustn't get away with it! Steel strikers must insist that there be no return to work by any plant until Molyneux and Herbertson are re-instated. A non-negotiable demand of the strike must be for no victimisations of any militants, sacked before or after 2 January. This is an elementary defence of the most basic trade union rights -- not an optional extra.

## SPARTACIST BRITAIN

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# Fake-left scabbing vs revolutionary perspective

# What road forward for steel workers?

The simple determination to extract a modest wage rise from BSC has catapulted steel workers into a full-scale confrontation with the hard-line austerity government of Margaret Thatcher. Openly betrayed by Bill Sirs and his ilk, deserted on the field of battle by even the most left-talking union officials like miners' leader Arthur Scargill, thrust face to face with what Trotsky characterised as the 'crisis of proletarian leadership', many of the most militant strike activists have become open to an explicitly revolutionary alternative. Which organisation has offered a genuinely revolutionary course of action?

The Spartacist League (SL) has intervened in this strike with a programme to broaden it and go beyond simple trade union militancy -- to break out of its economist, sectoral confines towards a generalised working-class mobilisation to defend living standards and trade union rights. We have denounced false strategies like import controls and exposed false friends like Scargill. Weeks before the steel workers went out, in the wake of the sacking of Derek Robinson and the introduction of the Prior Bill, the SL said: 'Call them *all* out -- now! And make this the first *general strike* since 1926.' But it has always been clear that the TUC leaders would only call the general strike when forced to do so by a powerful momentum from the base.

In a leaflet directed to a mass protest rally of steel workers in Rotherham, we said: 'Sack Sirs!', and 'Tell Arthur Scargill to call out the Yorkshire miners on indefinite strike and fight for the entire NUM to go out -- now!' To angry BL workers hit with a draconian attack on shop-floor organisation and a 5 per cent pay offer, we urged: 'Join the steel workers -- General strike now!' We called on Ford Dagenham workers to honour steel workers' picket lines and urged workers everywhere to follow the Liverpool dockers' lead.

## Scabs and cowards

We stand on our record before the steel workers -- not of fake 'organising', but of firm *programmatic* answers. Our opponents must stand on *their* record -- of abysmal routinism, confusion, cowardice, licking the boots of the Labour bureaucrats ... and *outright scabbing*!

The Communist Party (CP) does not even seriously pretend any more to be fighting for communist revolution. But it does claim to be for a strike victory and it has the forces to call out significant industrial battalions, especially among the miners and car workers -- something which could have ensured a solid victory for this strike early on. But CP supporters on various strike committees have done nothing to mobilise that support, and CPers in other industries have blatantly stabbed the steel strikers in the back. CP convenors at Ford Dagenham have covered up for the handling of blacked steel through Dagenham jetty, a central conduit for the shipment of steel throughout the country. When 8000 Sheffield engineering workers refused to cross strikers' picket lines last month and went out alongside the steel workers, it was the Confed 29 District Committee, heavily influenced by the CP, which ordered them back. And when steel workers set up a picket outside BL Cowley, one CP convenor actually flagged through a steel-laden lorry right in their presence.

But it is not just the CP. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the International Marxist Group (IMG) and the Workers Socialist League (WSL) *all* stand indicted of having *scabbed* on this strike! When confronted by SL supporters at a 22 March public meeting in Rotherham, SWP 'rank and file' leader John Deason retorted, 'I don't want to hear allegations about SWPers crossing picket lines. It's in our "Code of

Practice" not to cross picket lines.' It is indeed rule number one in the 'Rank and File Code of Practice' touted by the SWP and IMG both -- but lying and hypocrisy go well with scabbing. 'Allegations'? Any striker from Warrington or Teeside or Jarrow who has picketed Dagenham can tell Deason that SWP and IMG supporters -- having distributed their Ford Workers Group leaflet pledging '100 per cent' support -- then crossed those picket lines to go into work.

Cowley is the vaunted 'base' of WSL leader and Assembly Plant deputy convenor Alan Thornett. But Thornett was never on the picket lines using the 'authority' of '21 years in the plant', about which he bleats loud and often, to turn his co-workers back. Last year Thornett scabbed on the national engineering strike (see *Spartacist Britain* no 15, October 1979). Now his accomplice and fellow WSL leader Tony Richardson scabs on the steel strike -- he scrambled for cover in a nearby cafe and later darted through a side gate when he spotted a *Spartacist Britain* photographer about to catch him ambling through the picket line on Cowley's Body Plant.

Even when they were not crossing the picket lines themselves, the fake-lefts have been busy presenting the scab side of the battle. The IMG has been the most crass of the lot, featuring an article in its paper headlined, 'Hadfields -- an inside view'. This is an outrageous affront to the dozens of militant pickets who have been arrested while trying to stop anyone from *getting* an 'inside view' of Hadfields. But the IMG also sought out the inside views of the paid strikebreakers who have been making the arrests. As we reported last month, leading IMGer Tariq Ali wined, dined and 'debated' a representative of the West Midlands Police Association at Birmingham University only ten days after his thugs had raided the headquarters of the Birmingham strike committee (see box, page 10).

The SWP, for its part, felt the need to commiserate with the hardened scabs at Sheerness: 'The decision to expel Sheerness workers from the ISTC is nothing but an admission of defeat' (*Socialist Worker*, 1 March). The bureaucracy's refusal to organise an *effective* mass picket to shut down Sheerness *was* a defeat, but expelling scabs from the workers movement? Hypocritical as it may be coming from the ISTC executive, it is not only correct and principled but a necessary aspect of enforcing strike discipline which any militant should support.

## Workers Power: Don't 'alienate' the scabs

The small left-centrist Workers Power group-



Steel power: strikers from Consett on March 9 TUC demonstration

ing, despite having a line which is substantially to the left of the rest, has also taken up the cudgels for the private sector scabs. Mass pickets like the one that shut down Hadfields are 'absolutely vital', but, it adds, 'such action *on its own* runs the danger of alienating the workers in the private sector even more' (*Workers Power Steel Strike Bulletin* no 6). It is certainly true that the failure to advance a set of strike demands which meets the interests of private sector workers serves only to exacerbate existing divisions. But if the lack of a correct strike strategy was a justification for scabbing, then virtually every worker in the world today would be right to scab. We stand with Jack London: 'No man has a right to SCAB so long as there is a pool of water to drown his carcass in, or a rope long enough to hang his body with.' In the final analysis, the purpose of a mass picket is precisely to *impose* unity, to enforce solidarity, to 'alienate' scabs.

In defence of this concern for the Hadfields scabs, Workers Power spokesman Mark Hoskisson (speaking at a public meeting in Sheffield on February 18) derided the SL's 'hysteria' over scabbing -- claiming this stems from the international Spartacist tendency's supposed 'domination' by its American section, and the American experience, where scabs are 'all gun-toting hoodlums'. It does not take a 'gun-toting hoodlum' to be a scab, and it does not take an American to hate one. What it does take is a respect for trade union principles which has not been completely smothered by the social-democratic illusion that polite parliamentary debate is the 'rational' alternative to the nastiness of class struggle.

Nor does it take communist consciousness to see a picket line, only a pair of eyes. A picket line means don't cross -- whatever loopholes may be introduced as a result of bureaucratic practices and erosion of principles. A picketed shop is a struck shop -- One out, all out! That is the way it was understood by the 8000 engineering workers in Sheffield; that is the way it is understood by miners, who -- as one militant woman striker from Stocksbridge put it -- would shut down any pit even if only *one* steel picket stood outside. The argument that the pickets at Cowley or Dagenham were intended only to stop lorries -- like *any* argument for crossing picket lines -- is a justification for scab-

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# The king has no clothes

# What has Scargill done for the steelmen?

Militant steel workers and miners looking for a lead don't have a lot of illusions about most of the trade union bureaucrats. Warrington strike committee badges tell Bill Sirs to get stuffed; Rotherham strikers yell 'scab' at 'left' TGWU leader Alex Kitson; Len Murray almost got booed off the platform at the March 9 TUC demonstration. But one union leader still retains the confidence of many serious and conscious trade union militants: Arthur Scargill of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in Yorkshire.

Scargill was lifted into national prominence by his captaincy of the flying pickets who took on the government in the 1972 miners strike. He is charismatic in his speechifying, skilled at making empty promises, and shrewd enough to know that occasionally you have to do something if you want to keep your credentials polished. So a militant can always hope that King Arthur and his flying pickets are just over the hill.

Yet Scargill stands condemned as a *betrayal* by his criminal inaction during the current steel strike. So there was one mass picket at Hadfields, and he helped organise some flying squads. But from day one of the strike Scargill has consistently *not* done the one thing which could turn the tide of the entire battle -- bring the Yorkshire miners out on strike alongside the steelmen. Not at the start, not when the Welsh miners were threatening to go out alone and seeking national support, not when the Liverpool dockers launched their strike. And this is not an accident, but Scargill's conscious policy.

A special NUM national conference on import controls on March 14 saw implicit counterposition between delegates advancing diversionary and reactionary protectionism as the strategy to save jobs, and others who argued that strike action alongside the steel workers was the primary task. 'We must join the steelmen before it is too late', insisted one delegate from South Wales. Another challenged the podium (where Communist Party leader Mick McGahey was chairman), 'If you lot had come out and supported the South Wales miners we would have been ready to listen.' But Arthur Scargill did not join the South Wales delegates. Instead he simply gave a blustering, chauvinist speech for protectionism, not even mentioning the steel strike.

Following the conference a *Spartacist Britain* supporter asked him point blank if he would be prepared to bring his men out alongside the steel workers. He replied:

'I think my actions have demonstrated my support for the steelmen... I think that support for the steelmen has to be centralised and any other kind of action would be divisive.'

The words could have been spoken by Len Murray. And just what have King Arthur's 'actions' been? Four weeks into the strike he was still sanctioning the movement of steel from pit to pit -- in the face of opposition from a section of the Yorkshire miners.

Speaking at a meeting at Leeds University on March 20, Scargill further underlined his opposition to extending the steel strike into the mines. When Spartacist League supporters argued from the floor that such a perspective was necessary to ensure victory and smash the Tory



Arthur Scargill, all talk, no action, March 2 Rotherham steel rally

rampage against the working class, Scargill dismissed them as 'living in cloud-cuckoo land'. He repeatedly insisted that he had done everything steel union leaders had asked of him. But there could be no better recipe for defeat. If the steel workers had done what Bill Sirs asked they would have lost two months ago!

## Not the first betrayal

Arthur Scargill is a trade-union reformist -- fundamentally no better than the rest of them; and with a programme aimed at accommodating capitalism, fundamentally no less capable of betraying. Flat betrayals masked by a militant facade are nothing new for him. Several times during the last Labour government, he was instrumental in warding off a potentially explosive industrial showdown. He talked tough against the Social Contract, but at a critical point in 1975 when the miners could have been mobilised to fight for £100 a week and smash the wage-slashing Con-trick in its infancy, he backed right off. He dropped the fight for £100 at the NUM conference, putting forward instead a mild-mannered resolution which gave the leadership free rein to do what they wanted. Scargill had to fight to persuade other Yorkshire delegates to accept such a 'realistic' posture of cowardice.

His late 1977 retreat in the fight for the £135 pay claim and against incentive schemes was more elaborate -- and more damning. First he delayed and delayed in fighting to take the miners out alongside the battling firemen. Then he channelled the fight into a *court suit* against the national union leadership. This deeply reactionary action was a violation of the most elementary class principle. The bosses' courts have no right to decide what goes on in the labour movement! Moreover this rotten manoeuvre diverted and stymied the whole struggle, buying valuable time to head off militancy. Following the predictable defeat of his day in court, Scargill finally came out formally for strike action -- but even the *Sunday Times* was able to figure out that he didn't really want to win a January 1978 Yorkshire ballot:

'As the campaign got under way last week to decide whether the Yorkshire miners will hold out against the Government's pay policy, one voice remained strangely silent. "King Arthur"

Scargill, who has led the Yorkshire miners into many a battle and is now seeking a huge pay rise for them, took no part.

"Any other time and we'd be taken to the local union headquarters at Barnsley to listen to The Messiah", complained one member of the Yorkshire miners' executive. "This time Arthur hasn't lifted a finger. He wants to lose..."

"Scargill is just a shouter", said Bill Matthews in the canteen at the Hatfield pit. "He could have led a walkout from the NEC. That was his trade test, and he failed. We have been disenfranchised." (8 January 1978)

Scargill did indeed fail the test, just as he failed at Grunwicks later that year, joining with right-wing APEX leader Roy Grantham to lead thousands of militant pickets away from the factory gates and let the scab bus through. From then on the fight was in evident decline.

Today's mainstream trade union bureaucrats -- the Murrays, Sirs and Joe Gormleys, even 'lefts' like Kitson and Alan Fisher -- are so manifestly rotten that Scargill can rest on his laurels from the 1972 miners strike, posture very left, and seem a militant alternative. Indeed he is just about the only union leader of national stature today who seems to understand how to 'head to behead'. As he makes his way up the trade union hierarchy (the TUC General Council this year, the NUM presidency in 1981?) and increasingly in the Labour Party (Barnsley constituency next year, a Labour cabinet in 1984?) he will use his influence and reputation to betray even more massively. Scargill may well become a modern equivalent of the left-talkers Purcell and Cook who sold out the 1926 General Strike and demoralised a generation.

Helping him along are the fake-revolutionaries -- and no-one more cravenly than the fake-Trotskyists of the International Marxist Group. Approaching Scargill with an attitude bordering on hero worship, *Socialist Challenge* features front-page portraits and week after week of uncritical boosting of the sayings of Arthur Scargill. They couldn't even bring themselves to mention his month-long order to move steel in the mining areas. They actively encourage the illusion that he is far superior to his allies-cum-competitors in the NUM bureaucracy and throughout the TUC -- even approvingly citing the yearnings of 'three Scottish steel workers' for 'a Labour government headed by Arthur Scargill'.

If Scargill were a militant workers leader, not a reformist bureaucrat, he would be campaigning right now at every pit -- in Yorkshire and throughout the country -- to mobilise for strike action alongside the steel workers. Instead he makes a few speeches and gestures, meanwhile increasingly involving himself in Labour Party politicking. He pushes protectionist poison alongside Tony Benn at Tribune rallies, helping to restore workers' illusions in the Labour 'lefts' who so betrayed them during the last government. Only those who fight for the workers to rule -- not Labour in Westminster along with import controls and trade war -- can defend the trade unions today. That is the real reason Arthur Scargill hasn't brought the miners out. And that's the reason why he too is complicit in seeing that the heroic steel strikers are left isolated and prey for defeat. ■

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# Scabbing on October

# WSL: Hail Afghan reaction!

Zbigniew Brzezinski stood on the Khyber Pass as he blessed the reactionary Afghan 'freedom fighters' out to wage 'holy war' with CIA-supplied arms against the Soviet army. The Workers Socialist League (WSL) of scab Alan Thornett recently echoed the blessing from the safer quarters of Oxford, out of range of Soviet artillery. The WSL is nominally Trotskyist, but the headline in the 5 March issue of its *Socialist Press* could have been drafted by one of Brzezinski's press aides.

'Mass resistance to Soviet invaders' was the WSL's banner. 'Trotskyists side with the masses against the reactionary repression by the Stalinist bureaucracy', said the article. This 'mass resistance', as even the WSL had to admit, was 'not a communist or even proletarian-led opposition. Its most coherent section is clearly animated by profoundly reactionary Islamic ideas.' But, claimed these 'Trotskyists':

'Revolutionaries must see behind the verbal clothing in which opposition to the Soviet occupation is covered... For all its reactionary rhetoric this movement expresses the active striving of the petty bourgeois and even proletarian masses of Kabul for their basic democratic and material interests to which they see the Soviet bureaucracy as being totally hostile.'

Later, the same article drops in an absurd call to these 'Afghan workers and peasants' to 'fight alongside the Russian troops against the right-wing guerrilla bands!' Even this muddle can't disguise the WSL's reactionary sympathies.

It has chosen to tail a 'mass movement' which is 'actively striving' to overthrow the Soviet-backed regime of Babrak Karmal in order to reinforce the social relations which have kept Afghanistan mired in backwardness and extreme poverty for centuries. It is indeed totally hostile to the Soviet bureaucracy -- from the vantage point of reactionary Islamic feudalism. Shocking as this new position should be to any subjective Trotskyist in the WSL, it shares a



fundamental continuity with the WSL's first response to the Soviet military intervention, which despite a grudging *pro forma* 'stand for the unconditional defence of the USSR against imperialist aggression', showered contempt on the USSR's 'trampling on the rights of the people of Afghanistan' (*Socialist Press*, 9 January). These 'rights' being 'trampled on' by the Russian army include the 'right' to wear a veil, be stoned for adultery, or be shot for teaching school.

Moreover the WSL's thoroughgoing capitulation to the Afghan reactionaries is completely consistent with its hailing of the Khomeinist 'mass movement' which marched through the streets of Tehran last year, chanting -- like the petty-bourgeois mobs in Kabul today -- 'God

is great' and 'Death to Communists'. And even after Khomeini in power had begun butchering national minorities, imprisoning and torturing leftists and sending homosexuals to the firing squads -- the WSL was *still* claiming: 'the uprisings which have ousted the Shah ... have given a new impulse to the world struggle against imperialism' (*International Discussion Bulletin* no 1, November 1979).

In a polemical defence of its solidarity with the struggle for the veil and illiteracy in Afghanistan, another recent issue of *Socialist Press* (20 February) slanderously accuses us of 'racism' and even 'statements more reactionary than those that could be expected from any but fascist elements in the working class'. Why? Because we dare to describe the backward and wretched condition of life in that country -- and to point out that the Soviet intervention opens up a perspective for bringing Afghanistan into the twentieth century.

It is typical of liberal moralism to take affront at accurate descriptions of life among the oppressed -- and argue against changing it. But there is more to this slander than moralism. Particularly since their recent expulsion of the Leninist Faction (LF), which solidified with the international Spartacist tendency's Trotskyist stand on, among other things, the question of Iran, the WSL leadership has embarked on an increasingly hysterical campaign of Healyoid slander and scarcely-veiled cop-baiting against the Spartacist League in a vain attempt to seal off the WSL membership from authentic Trotskyism. But the LF's current motion towards fusion with the Spartacist League will be followed by other subjective Trotskyists in the WSL who are fed up with Thornett & Co's wilful programmatic confusion and, increasingly, flat betrayals. Having scabbed on a strike in its Cowley bailiwick, it is not the least bit surprising that the WSL would scab on the October Revolution as well. ■

## Bitter memories of life in Kabul

# 'The sun never shines on Afghan women'

The Afghanistan conflict is one of the first shooting wars in which the oppression of women has been the central social issue. Even bourgeois journalists have been struck by the barbaric enslavement of women which the reactionary Afghan rebels defend. 'It's called the bride price' began an article in the American *Wall Street Journal* (8 February) headlined 'Afghan Communists battle poverty, poor hygiene, entrenched attitudes'. The *New York Times* (9 February) quoted one of the Islamic 'freedom fighters' so beloved of Carter, Brzezinski and Margaret Thatcher: 'The Government said our women had to attend meetings and our children had to go to schools. This threatens our religion. We had to fight.'

In a recent presentation in New York Phyllis Anwar, speaking from personal experience, brought home the bitterness of women's oppression in the Afghanistan of the mullahs and khans. Comrade Anwar was the first foreign woman married to a native Afghan to refuse to put on the veil when she lived there in the 1940s. The following excerpts from her remarks are reprinted from *Workers Vanguard*, paper of the Spartacist League/US, no 250, 22 February.

I spent three years, back in the 40s, living Afghan-style in Afghanistan. When you think about a Moslem country you think about the oppression of women, but there is more to oppression in Afghanistan than just women -- there's plenty to go around.

Women's veils there make an Iranian veil look silly. They're made up of 30 yards of muslin folded into half-inch folds. The veil is enormously heavy, without even eye slits. And eight-year-old girls wore this veil at the school where I taught -- which by the way had to be called a hospital to fool the mullahs. So here were these kids traipsing over dusty roads in a black cover. In a country which should be a

haven for TB sanitariums, the women have a very high rate of tuberculosis and practically never have the sun shine on them.

The bride price is part of the business of passing down fortunes. A man as a rule can't marry until he's in his 30s, as it costs a lot of money. He always wants a 14- or 15-year old bride. It is not considered at all unusual for a 60-year-old man to take a 14-year-old bride when he's worn out some poor woman and wants a new wife. You know a man can divorce a woman -- I was once divorced this way -- by sending her a postcard that says three times 'I hereby divorce you' and it's done. If a woman wants to divorce a man, he supposedly has to return her dowry money to her family, but since they're all so poor he has of course already spent it. So he simply makes her life so miserable she's perfectly willing to give up that money and then she can have her divorce -- and then go back to her family where she's a household slave because she's now too old to ever get a husband again.

On the day I came to Kabul there was a demonstration. The mullahs were demonstrating because they felt that the veil was inadequate -- men were looking at women's ankles, from which they could tell if the women were rich or poor, young or old, and this was disturbing to the mullahs. They wanted the women to wear balloon pants, the kind uneducated Afghan men wear, but the variety with feet in them, like kids' pajamas, and then they should wear clogs and that way the men wouldn't be so interested in looking at their ankles.

It isn't really a life for the men either. This matter of the oppression of women is a very serious matter for men, particularly in the city where you don't have farm animals available. So in the city there is a great blooming of part-time or temporary homosexuality with emphasis on pretty young boys. There you don't have to worry about your little girls going down to Times

Square. They're safe, except at the hands of the house servants. But boys are liable to get kidnapped. Many high-class members of the government were known for having stables of pretty young boys.

There is every kind of oppression. In 1950 I saw a chart put out by the UN on yearly average income and Haiti and Afghanistan were at the bottom. \$50 per capita per year. That's bad enough in Haiti -- it's perfectly terrible in Afghanistan, where winters start about the first of January and go on for months, cold and lots of snow. Then there is religion. Afghanistan is the reverse of Iran -- Sunnis are the majority and the oppressed minority are the Shia. A Shi'ite could not progress in the government beyond the level of school superintendent, no Shi'ite could serve in the foreign service, and so on, and they all lived together in a ghetto in Kabul.

All religious laws were enforced by the government, and half the school time when we were there was religious education. When it's fast time and you forget and walk out of the building with a cigarette in your hand or you take a drink out of the brook -- which is lethal to do -- before you die you'll get a good beating. And police do it right then and there on the spot.

Those of our relatives who have come here moved heaven and earth not to have to go back. When I was there many women said to me that they would be willing for anybody to take over Afghanistan, including Russia, because it couldn't possibly be worse under anybody else. Of course, they don't say that to the men, because they know where their bread and butter comes from. But the women, while they're ignorantly religious, were really so desperate they were willing to take anything. I'm sure in their hearts they're mighty happy to see the Soviet soldiers come. ■

From Washington to the Khyber Pass, US president Jimmy Carter and his National Security Adviser Brzezinski are deploying their weapons to 'punish' the Russians -- grain embargo, Olympic boycott campaign, ban on the export of technology, freeze on cultural exchanges and direct military threats. Today in the imperialist powerhouse the fires of deadly patriotism are being fanned -- and for the first time since the 1950s, America is experiencing a popular mood of anti-Soviet jingoism.

Once again the media is filled with 1950s-style calls to help 'freedom fighters' to 'contain' Soviet 'aggression'. Once again there are cries to unleash the 'reformed' FBI and strengthen the CIA. The presidential candidates differ only in disputing the degree of Carter's 'effectiveness' against the USSR: will the grain boycott really starve the people of Russia before it bankrupts the people of Iowa? In the trade union movement a bureaucracy tempered in social patriotism spearheads a reactionary boycott of Soviet ships and cargo. And even though thousands have taken to the streets to protest the threatened re-imposition of military conscription, the demonstrations have been infected with chauvinism as the leaders wave the flag and explicitly denounce the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Behind the Cold War rhetoric is an increasing US arsenal readying for another war. We Marxists say: No to the imperialist conscription -- Smash Carter's war drive -- Victory to the Red Army in Afghanistan!

Afghanistan has heated up the Cold War mood that has run at different temperatures since the October Revolution overturned capitalism in Russia. But unlike the post-World War II period, the US is no longer the seemingly all-powerful imperialist behemoth; the other imperialists are less subordinate allies and more rivals. Can the US bourgeoisie bring off 'Cold War II'? We reprint below, from *Workers Vanguard* no 251, excerpts from a report given by Spartacist League/US National Chairman James Robertson to the California Spartacist comrades.

If you look back over about the last year, the gang in Washington has been increasingly restless. They committed a series of atrocities along the way. You remember the phony Cuba crisis where some 1500 Russian troops that had been in Cuba from its inception suddenly were discovered? There was a great confrontation, which blew up in Carter's face, and in fact was one of the contributory factors to his precipitous loss of popularity and the then assumption that he wasn't going to get re-elected.

Okay, so here's this bunch. They had the phony Cuba crisis, and then real hard stuff. Do you remember seizing the Soviet Aeroflot liner at Kennedy [airport] because it had a ballerina that was trying to get away from her rotten husband and get back to cash in on her loyalty chips in Moscow? Apparently she's not a very good ballerina, but now she's getting all the first roles in Moscow. And of course she wanted to go back. But you remember what the government did? Real big violation stuff.

Then they stumbled into their little difficulties in Iran, and I remember that the American government said, 'We're going to raise in the Security Council the question of demanding that the hostages be let go. And if the Russians vote against it, we will take this as a hostile act!' And so the Russians abstained on the issue, and then the Americans got their Afghan thing to play. Suddenly, from saying,



Spartacus Youth League calls for defence of USSR, February 9

# Cold War II?



Aimed at USSR?

## No detente illusions! Victory to Soviet army in Afghanistan!

'My, how could Russia commit a hostile act against our state interests', then bang! Now they're being very clear, they're arming the Afghani mongrels that they find drifting around on the Pakistani side of the border. Massive escalation -- very overt.

And of course, a lot of accoutrements, like a new charter for the CIA, *de facto*, and they'll work out *de jure* later. They've got Zbigniew Brzezinski running around. He almost got offed. Remember he turned to a Pakistani soldier and said, 'Son, can you use that submachine gun?' And the soldier said, 'You try.' He said, 'No, no, you try.' So the guy pulls the trigger and of course automatic weapons when you don't hold them right start firing all over the place. And we almost lost one of our revered advisers at the Khyber Pass, while he was shouting, 'On to Kabul!'

So, is there a second Cold War? Well, Carter wants to get elected and 'the fatherland is in danger' is a way to try it. It's a pretty big deal. Now, the Russians are genuinely annoyed and I know that we did put in *Workers Vanguard* what Brezhnev had to say. He said that these people are irresponsible. He said it very succinctly, better than our press did, which is why we quoted the Russians. Well, if there's going to be a second Cold War, what kind of compass do we have? One wants to think perhaps about the first Cold War and see what conditions tend to be the same and those that are very different.

The United States emerged the unique victor from the Second World War. The European bourgeoisie had holes in their shoes. The Americans had an absolute monopoly on nuclear weapons. They had over 50 percent of the industrial production of what I think is called the 'free world'. And considering the state of Russian production at the time, they may have had an absolute majority of all productive capacity on the planet. They had naked power and no other capable of contending with or even modifying their policies.

At the same time they emerged victor, it was a victor in a world they didn't very much like. And remember, from the standpoint of American socialists, we see an enormous difference between the Stalinists' victory in China, the massive militancy of revisionist workers parties in Europe, and militant trade unionism in the United States -- all these things taking place in '45-'46. But from the standpoint of the American bourgeoisie, I think they had a more unitary and less rational outlook. I recall sometime later some of the creatures of the Nixon administration, their minister of the in-

terior and his nutty wife, standing and watching a demonstration from the windows of the Justice Department -- these utterly tame peaceniks over the Vietnam War -- and the woman turned around and said to her husband, 'My god, it looks like the Russian Revolution!'

Well, if you examine the press at the time, the American bourgeoisie with all their power faced an enormous escalating American strike wave and a labor movement that was saturated with 100,000 reds, controlling perhaps a quarter of the structure of the labor movement. A troops-come-home movement in Europe, but especially in Asia, which had to be conceded to. A very large majority of the population of West Europe overtly organized and yearning for some sort of socialism or communism; all of the institutional structures like monarchies and right-wing parliamentary devices and the rest crumbling. Churchill thrown out in favor of a Labour Party, which it's hard to believe now, but it marched into Parliament singing 'The Red Flag' -- in Britain, the conservative bastion in Europe. Russian soldiers deep into Germany and in the Balkans, and what they saw as a thoroughgoing communistic revolution in China. And yet they had raw and unique power. And that confrontation was the Cold War, basically.

The interesting point is that from the standpoint of the bourgeoisie, the domestic witch-hunt, which was a part of the Cold War, was not subjectively on their part an irrational mindless reflex of, 'Well, we've got the CIA running around internationally, doing dirty tricks, so the FBI wants to do their thing here.' No, they saw it in a little more unitary way -- that it was necessary to break the back of and discipline the American labor movement as part and parcel of the whole thing. From *their* standpoint, 20 million workers in militant strikes and winning big concessions in the United States was of a piece with all the rest of the developments around the globe. In other words, they overestimated -- but then, why shouldn't they?

And the thing was pretty hard. One could go into lots of stories characterizing it. One thing that is apparently true and not sufficiently well-known is that just before the CIA was reconstituted out of the fragments of the OSS, the Americans allegedly made the greatest coup -- they got a defecting chief of security of the Polish state in place. I guess it was the Dulles boys probably [who] played a game and they managed to feed to Stalin information which the paranoid old man was quite prepared to believe: that every Stalinist leader in East Europe who had not both been in Moscow during

the Second World War and was a hopelessly mindless pro-Russian hack -- that if those two qualities were not met, in fact the men involved were American agents. The Americans, to their immense pleasure, because they wanted to draw a perfect line -- no national communism -- got the Russians to run what are called the Tito purges, thereby laying the basis for the perspective of 'rollback'. Remember that slogan, 'rollback' or 'containment'?

This was the greatest coup, that they got the Russians to purge tens of thousands of Communists, and the Communists who most had roots in their own nations. The enthusiasm, of course, led them immediately to found the CIA in order to institutionalize this kind of technique and to go on to ever higher and higher successes. Well, they never got any ever higher and higher successes. They managed to 'save' Guatemala, they managed to 'save' Iran via coups. And I can't think of anything else that they did. They certainly didn't 'save' Cuba very well. Theodore Draper said that the Bay of Pigs was one of those truly rare things in political life -- a perfect failure, without any redeeming consequence whatsoever. (Although, while we may never know about it, it also had something to do with the premature demise of the first president who hired the Mafia to run whores into the White House ... which is how he ought to go down in history ... 'Camelot'.)

Well, they ran this Cold War for a long time, a series of confrontations, especially the Korean War. And the domestic high point of it, I'm sure, was the execution of the Rosenbergs. Did their best to smash insurgencies more or less successfully in the Philippines and a dozen other places. Very expensive, of course. Not particularly in American blood, but in American wealth. It was the basis for the situation now. With absolute American economic and military power, the Americans were in a position to make the world eat dollars, billions and billions of dollars. And furthermore, to propagate the charming myth that gold was demonetized, that it had no meaning, only the dollar was a unit of exchange. They simply forced these billions and billions of dollars on the rest of the capitalist world. Which meanwhile, of course, economically, was making a pretty steady comeback, especially those areas that had been fortunate enough to have their outmoded industrial apparatus removed by American air power during the Second World War, particularly Germany and Japan, so that they had a clean field to start with. That is, they had a highly skilled labor force, all of the raw materials, all of the managerial expertise and they were not weighed down by an archaic investment in old apparatus, in old physical plant.

So, a series of quantitative developments took place: the undermining of the American dollar (and of course Vietnam vastly accelerated all of this), the growth in industrial and military potential for a number of other capitalist powers. This stuff ran on and on, and the American politicians working with the 'After me, the deluge' proposition, acting like the mayors of New York, except that the American presidents have state power. So, they will never have a New York City-type problem because they'll just print more money (they thought) based on American hegemony. But American hegemony became undermined and it collapsed. There's a nice date for it: the 15th of August 1971 Nixon devalued the dollar -- let it float, I think -- did a whole bunch of other things at the same time. And it was the official declaration that American hegemony, absolute power, was over.

The Russians just toughed it out in that whole period by and large, armed like hell, and took a defensive posture, took whatever dives they could, took whatever advantages they could. It's funny that the Americans are screaming about the Near East now, because -- was it 1958? -- Khrushchev was going to see Eisenhower, and the Iraqi Communists were at the leadership of quite a good proletarian upheaval and the Russians gave those orders to the Iraqi Communist Party that caused it to be beheaded, its leaders, its central committee murdered. And all so that the Russian leadership could go have a nice chat with Eisenhower at Camp David. That was Iraq. The Iraqi Ba'athist Party has never forgotten the menace, of course. Didn't they just execute another 20 Communists in the army? That's right -- Healy said it was a good thing, I remember that.

So, the Russian bureaucracy took a very conservative policy, pretty empirical, and toughed it out and retained the posture of trying to deal with the Americans with a carrot and a stick, hanging tough when they could, doing this or that, seeking trade, what have you. They're still doing the same kind of thing, not much different, been pretty continuous in their poli-

cies. And the Americans after '71 -- it wasn't particularly Watergate or even the defeat in Vietnam -- those are psychological -- but American power atrophied relative to the rest of the world. You can look at the nuclear proliferation -- that's another index of it all. So that even the Indians and the Israelis both have atom bombs. Everybody knows that the Japanese could have all that they ever wanted within six months if any one manufacturer decided to have them. And the South Africans are grinding away and have all the prerequisites, maybe a bit more than prerequisites etc.

And I notice funny things going on even in South America. Carter tried another tack. Remember 'Human Rights'? So, he annoyed the Brazilian and Argentine generals by demanding that they practice 'Human Rights', an idea which was quite novel to them. And I notice now that the Brazilian generals are happily denouncing the Israelis for not respecting Arab 'Human Rights' and the Argentine generals are pointing out that the Russian gold reserves are very large indeed and it's a good market for wheat. Even the not-very-powerful inmates of the backyard of American imperialism are pretty uppity.

So, I don't know that the American bourgeoisie can bring this off, a new Cold War. I really don't. Maybe they will. Maybe there's something there, the crucial element that eludes me, but I don't see it. Furthermore, there's not even much point in making a massive assault on sections of the American population, only obnoxious groups like the Spartacist League and a few thousand more need to be taken care of. And the erstwhile Trotskyists of the SWP, god knows,

are tame enough. The Maoists, who used to be quite numerous and still more or less are, are now firm allies of American imperialism, and by and large endorse the proposition that NATO must be stronger in order to fight the Russians and all that. The American labor movement remains pretty tractable.

But don't think we're not going to get some casualties. We got one. Fred Zierenberg was the most seriously injured of all our central cadre in Frankfurt. But don't think that there weren't other guys stabbed in the belly, people kicked in the head and smashed around. A murderous attack. Maoists using Afghani counterrevolutionary assassins.

The other thing is, something that has been just about entirely suppressed in the American press, there is one hell of a steel strike going on in Britain, tending to lead to a very, very heavy confrontation with the government. Now, you have to understand British conditions not to be carried away with what happened in a number of places: uniquely, our Spartacist League of Britain leaflet was posted by the men around a lot of the strike areas. You've got to remember that for them a communist fraction is about the same thing as a union caucus for us, because they're a more advanced working class. So it didn't mean that they're embracing communism, rather that they perfectly well expect that socialists, Trotskyists, Stalinists, what have you, are an organic part of the working class. And if they like something, you don't have this sense of dual unionism -- you post and embrace it as part of your section of the workforce, as a

continued on page 8

## Olympics: Let them go to Moscow!

From a room five flights above a self-service laundry in Geneva, the US government -- with Britain firmly in tow -- has made yet another 'last ditch' attempt to 'punish Communist aggression' in Afghanistan. On March 17, after weeks of pounding the pavement in search of support, US and British delegates met with representatives from a handful of governments, including such 'freedom-loving' athletic stalwarts as Saudi Arabia and Sudan, to rally support for a 'Free World Olympics' as an 'alternative' to the Moscow games. The imperialists responsible for the A-bombing of Hiroshima, the murder of millions of defenceless Vietnamese, obscenely call for boycotting the Moscow Olympics in the name of international political morality -- all to whip up flag-waving public sentiment for their new Cold War drive.

Even Chile has been mentioned as a possible site for these 'alternative' games. What more fitting arena for Carter's counter-Olympics than the bloody Santiago Stadium where thousands of leftists and trade-union militants were held and many hundreds killed after the 1973 coup? Pinochet's government could inaugurate the Chilean military's 'game' of shooting trade unionists. Afghani 'freedom fighters', having almost no trade unionists of their own to shoot, might be allowed a substitute -- shooting in the back Communist school teachers bringing literacy to enslaved Muslim women. And perhaps the Saudis will want to add a new event: stoning 'adulteresses' to death.

Since the international athletic community and Lord Killanin's International Olympic Committee have made it emphatically clear that they want no part in organising alternative games, the Geneva conference was nothing more than a publicity stunt -- for Britain, a prelude to the House of Commons vote in favour of an official Olympic boycott. But the stunt impressed almost no one but the MPs. Even Prince Philip admitted to a *Daily Express* reporter that as an official in the equestrian association he was hard pressed to think up an excuse not to go. Yet the current Labour Party leadership supports a boycott. Although many Labour MPs voted against the government motion, Callaghan's main gripe with Thatcher is only that, 'The Western position could have been co-ordinated far more than it was' (*Times*, 30 January).

Despite every attempt at creating obstacles -- from a withdrawal of government financial support to the refusal to allow government employees paid leaves of absence -- Thatcher has succeeded mainly in reinforcing the conviction among athletes and trade unionists alike that a



Krokodil satirises Olympics boycott

team should be going to Moscow. On the eve of the Commons debate, the Civil and Public Servants Association even pledged to call athlete members out on strike in order to aid their trip to Moscow by giving them strike pay.

For revolutionaries, the current widespread opposition to boycotting the Moscow games is heartening. But those who oppose the boycott because they believe 'the games' must be 'above politics' are living in fantasyland. The siting of the Olympics has always been a highly political act. Nor do communists see the Moscow Olympics as a great victory for 'detente', as do the Soviet leaders and the British CP. The international proletarian revolution, not a false 'detente', will unite the workers of the world.

We intransigently oppose the Olympic boycott campaign because it is a diplomatic attack on the Soviet degenerated workers state, part of Carter/Thatcher's attempt to mobilise support for their anti-Soviet war drive. Stop the Carter/Thatcher Cold War iron curtain! Support the athletes' fight to go to Moscow!

# Cold War II?...

(Continued from page 7)

good expression. So we got a lot of that. That was good.

Okay, I've already given you the main point. I don't know how the Americans are going to be able to bring it off, because they've got to try to keep a bunch of substantial capitalist powers in line. They have to try to orchestrate it. The Americans still are not good at orchestration. They've deeply offended the Japanese over the approach to China and in general in blocking with the Common Market against Japanese imperialism. And the Common Market itself is not united. In fact, the Common Market in effect is just a cover name for West Germany, as any French president will tell you.

And so I don't know that they're going to be able to bring it off. Furthermore, it's pretty irrational. It does suggest, however, that if American power is not smashed in the world, the world as we know it will end. That is, at one or another point along the way, and rather sooner than later on the scale of world history, some bunch in Washington is going to find themselves, however irrationally, rammed into a corner and start something that goes nuclear and escalates somewhere. Rather sooner than later. Or maybe one of their clients, like the Israelis, will pull something like that and then pull others in. Not necessarily this time -- there's no reason to say that it would not be now, but in the course of the undulations of the imperialist system. And particularly the role of the Americans, they're a pretty deadly bunch, they're going to start a nuclear war. This is just a useful reminder, because sometimes when things go along fairly smoothly and the government's talking about 'Human Rights' and they're not actively pouring napalm on insurgent dark-skinned peoples right this year, and all that kind of stuff, it's easy to fall back and take the mask of the bourgeoisie for good coin. And then, of course, they get a little bit jammed up, the mask slips, you see the mass killing, mass insanity; all this talk about sacredness of treaties, 'Human Rights' and the rest, just utterly wiped out. So that right now, the official position of the United States is that human freedom means what the Afghani mullahs

want. That is 'freedom'! You know what that is. Isn't it great -- they got a Russian colonel and they stripped all the skin off him while he was still alive. Thus they struck a blow for 'freedom'. They shoot every schoolteacher they can get, because reading is Communist. And all this stuff about women -- that's 'freedom' now. That's the official American position -- it's out there raw.

We happened to be looking at a program about the teenage Central Asian gymnasts and I thought about Afghanistan and the hideous oppression of women. This Nelli Kim I believe is the daughter of a Tatar and a North Korean, a product of the 'enemy' side in the Korean War. And I thought maybe in a generation there will be an Afghan Nelli Kim, quite liberated and quite successful.



Joseph McCarthy, Cold War witchhunter

In fact, that's probably fundamental. It is not at all clear to me that the course of the Afghan revolution was very well thought out. It's not our place really, it's very difficult to do and there's not much material. Apparently the entire young intelligentsia of Kabul was pro-Communist as they understood it, and they had no other social base in the countryside. And they didn't do any salami tactics, you know, they didn't separate out and take on first the landlords, and then maybe the mullahs and then maybe somebody else and upgrade the peasantry and do this and that. So they managed to unite the nation.

trary transfers between lines; an end to the 'mutuality' system (thus depriving the union of any say over job speed and manning levels); a new five-grade wage structure which will mean a down grade for many assembly workers; and much more.

The imposition of a 'settlement' over the heads of the union, and in flagrant disregard for the February rejection vote by the membership, would undermine the very cornerstone of trade union rights -- the right to organise and bargain collectively. Edwardes has announced that any worker who shows up on April 8 will be 'deemed' to have accepted the new plan, and has promised each of them a £100 'bonus'. Every one of BL Cars' 86,000 workers has received a letter signed by manager Ray Horrocks warning of 'disciplinary action' against any attempts to 'disrupt' the imposition of the new 'settlement'.

## Don't let them lose it!

The bureaucrats' response to all this has been pitiful. Instead of tearing Edwardes' offer to shreds the moment it was released and slamming the brakes on every assembly line at BL, they have stalled six weeks since the rejection vote and offered an 'alternative' proposal which scarcely tops management's: a 10 per cent wage 'rise' (ie a ten per cent cut after inflation) and plant-by-plant negotiating over the productivity strings. Leaving each plant to fight the productivity attacks on its own is so perfect a set-up for a management divide-and-conquer strategy that it would warm even Edwardes' heart -- were he not set on wrecking the unions at one stroke.

The whole management offensive could have been smashed months ago, starting with the Robinson victimisation. Tens of thousands streamed out of the plants when Robinson was sacked last November -- only to be ordered back for Terry Duffy's scab 'inquiry'. When the inquiry finally reported back two months later, the national AUEW bureaucrats wanted their feeble 'strike call' (with 'dispensation' for anyone who wanted to cross picket lines) to lose. And even with 40,000 workers laid off, a strike mandate in their pockets and the steel strike

against the intelligentsia. And then they started being exterminated. Furthermore, except that Russia was not far away, they did the same thing with the army that Allende did in Chile -- he relied on it. But there was another army nearby.

So one could be critical. But we're being critical of people who were shot to death for wanting to teach little girls to read and write. Or worse than shot to death. And I do not believe that any sane person can deny that the present perspective for Afghanistan, which has been a lost place for a few hundred years, is such that the people in a generation will be immensely better off.

So Carter thinks he's pulled something pretty smart. A felt offense to the American nation took place -- namely the seizure of the American embassy personnel. Of course they're all spies. Every member of every embassy from all time has always been a spy. That is their job. They're put in a foreign country in order to look around. Do you understand that? What an absurdity. The Persian empire has existed for a long time and they have had many ambassadors and they've always been spies. It's absurd. But what Carter's managed to do, is that somewhere you get the idea that it was the Russian army that's holding the people in Iran. Meanwhile, of course, as soon as they start beating the drums over Afghanistan, they soften the line on the ayatollah, begin to say, 'Look, we're both members of ruling classes. Don't you understand? The Russians are *Commies*! We must unite against them. Just let these 50 people go, we don't care what you do, we'll give you all the guns in the world in order to pursue your ruling-class revolution.' And that's the shift that's being attempted.

Now I don't place a lot of credit on present public opinion. I don't think that a lot of people liked Churchill's Fulton, Missouri speech in 1947 that was the official inauguration of the Cold War. But insofar as I am capable of sampling the middle-class political responses in the Midwest, the position that is reported back is that, 'Yeah, we're ready to fight for our country, but what's this Afghanistan? Carter just wants to get elected president.' That is the current American folk response. I'll tell you, it can be shifted. These things are highly manipulable. They are dependent variables. But it's nice to know that. ■

# British Leyland: Strike now!...

(Continued from page 12)

another 9000 set to go before the year is out. The victimisation of Robinson was a particularly savage blow against the BL unions' historically strong shop-floor organisation. And Edwardes' latest *diktat* means a savage cut in real wages tied to 102 pages of productivity strings which

## Rover Solihull TGWU branch calls for general strike

The following resolution was passed unanimously (17 votes for, 2 not voting) by a meeting of the TGWU no 5/357 branch, BL Rover Solihull, on March 30:

This branch sees the attempt to impose five per cent and anti-union measures as an attack on the very existence of trade unionism in BL. We note the call for strike action for April 8, but believe we have waited too long for action against Edwardes attacks. We demand that the national executive call strike action now throughout BL. Furthermore Rovers Solihull should come out immediately and set up picket lines to begin such a strike.

This branch also declares support for all trade unionists fighting the Tory and employer offensive and resolves to co-ordinate strike action with these workers -- from the steelmen to the Liverpool dockers to the strike of builders at Rovers Solihull itself.

We believe all such actions should be linked through the TUC calling an immediate general strike to stop the attacks of Thatcher and the employers.

even the *Guardian* (19 March) admits are 'indeed all-embracing'. They include the elimination of any demarcation between maintenance craftsmen; the abolition of stewards' rights to stop arbi-

raging, a meeting of all plant convenors at Canley on March 7 refused to call out the workforce to join their class brothers at BSC.

Militant steel strikers have been *trying* to get solidarity from BL. Several coachloads of them lobbied the March 7 convenors meeting with a leaflet entitled, 'Steelworkers' Appeal: Join Us on Strike'. They have thrown up picket lines outside BL Castle Bromwich and, more recently, the Cowley Body Plant. But the national union chiefs and local convenors have done *nothing* in response -- except to tell their men to cross picket lines and wait, wait, and wait some more.

This treachery has extended to the 'left' BL convenors in and around the Communist Party. They acquiesced to Duffy's inquiry and helped knife the strikes in defence of Robinson. The *Morning Star* supported the convenors' 'no strike' decision, and even now uncritically reprints Grenville Hawley's comments calling on Edwardes to 'have a modicum of common sense' and reopen negotiations in order to avoid a strike! In sharp contrast, militants at Rovers Solihull have demanded a strike *now*, co-ordination with the steelmen and a general strike (see box).

The bureaucrats' treachery and sectionalism will only dig the grave for the trade union movement. It is no accident that workers at BSC and BL -- two of the most advanced cases of British capitalist decrepitude -- are on Thatcher's chopping block right now. But the answer is not to 'save BL' by parroting Edwardes' 'Buy British' rhetoric, as the CP and the Labour 'lefts' do. Nor certainly to submit to slavery under the Edwardes whip, as AUEW General Secretary Sir John Boyd wants, in his call for a three-year moratorium on *all* production stoppages -- 'to prove that nationalisations can be efficient and competitive' (*Guardian*, 3 March). No! While the bosses worry about 'saving BL', 'saving Britain' and saving their rotten capitalist system, the workers must fight to save their unions and their jobs, and to forge a new revolutionary leadership which can bury bankrupt capitalism.

Make Edwardes stuff it! For a national strike now! For joint co-ordinated strike committees with the steel workers and dockers! General strike now! ■



# What road forward?...

(Continued from page 3)

bing, pure and simple. Any picket is at bottom intended to spread an industrial dispute. And the Dagenham picketers who were gratified by the action of the Ford worker who refused to cross their lines knew it. Strikebreakers and scabs are to be found on one side of a picket line, and genuine trade unionists on the other; and that is the only way it can be.

## The general strike and the programme for power

Yet the class struggle is not just a 'trade union question'; trade unions by themselves are incapable of resolving the conflict in favour of the workers, by putting them in power. As Trotsky's Transitional Programme put it, 'Scabs and private gunmen in factory plants are the basic nuclei of the fascist army. Strike pickets are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army. This is our point of departure.' The Spartacist League's stand against scabbing on principle, our firm insistence on the necessity for a general strike from the very start, flow directly from our programme for working class power. And the scabbing either committed or excused, the vacillation or hesitation or refusal of every other organisation in the workers movement to fight for a general strike, are rooted in their lack of such a programme.

The steel strike had been raging for nearly three weeks before the IMG and WSL, in their confused centrist fashion, recognised even that some sort of general strike was on the agenda. The IMG has since twisted and turned, from posing the general strike as an 'overall goal', to not mentioning it at all, to lately joining the SWP and even Sid Weighell of the NUR in calling for a one-day general strike ... on May 14! The WSL pins all its hopes on the TUC -- but to force the TUC to call a general strike means mobilising at the base. Yet when Alan Thornett in his capacity as a BL deputy convenor addressed 2000 steel workers on March 3 in Sheffield, he did not so much as mention the general strike. Indeed the WSL's call for a general strike whose focus is to 'bring down the Tory government' (echoed now and again by the IMG) acts -- particularly given their calls for the 'return of a Labour government' -- as a rallying cry for placing Callaghan/Benn back in power.

For all its posturing as a 'militant', 'revolutionary' alternative to the CP, the SWP has been no less reformist and no less adamant in refusing to generalise this struggle -- except on those rare occasions when it has done so to tail the bureaucracy as in the Welsh TUC's regional general strike call. Despite having supporters in a number of strategic strike committees, the SWP's *Real Steel News* (RSN) has provided no programmatic alternative to steel militants fed up with Sirs' betrayals. The programme of 'Steelworkers and Reform', supported by RSN, consists of a number of minimal democratic reforms for the ISTC. And for all its occasional rhetoric about the fight against redundancies, even this is not part of its programme for the strike: 'A victory in this pay strike will put our organisation in a fighting position to stop the jobs massacre' (*Real Steel News* National Strike Edition no 5; emphasis added). The best the SWP can offer rank-and-file militants is militant rank-and-fileism -- a programme geared to the preservation of what little the working class has under capitalism.

That is why the SWP refuses to call for a general strike. Some discomfited SWP militants have attempted to explain this away as a mistake, or an oversight, or even a desire not to

'leap over' the consciousness of the workers. But the SWP opposes the general strike; and as *Socialist Worker* (1 March) explains, its reasons are no different from those of the Labour and trade union bureaucrats:

'The prospect of a General Strike appeared to loom large for a number of weeks in South Wales...

'The problem for socialists is to never realistically lose sight of the dangers involved in such talk without realising the consequences involved.

'A General Strike, by its very nature, raises the issue of power. It is a bomb that you cannot play with.' (*Socialist Worker*, 1 March 1980)

It is of course true that a general strike poses the question of power and can easily lead to a direct challenge to capitalist class rule which the current pro-capitalist TUC and Labour leaders would betray. As long as these traitors maintain their grip over the working class, there is no tactic or strategy that can guarantee success for a general strike. But a general strike is today objectively posed -- what the SWP tells workers is to sit back and submit to the Tories' attacks without a fight!

We counterpose to this criminal passivity a general strike for clearly limited and defensive aims -- to reverse the Tory offensive -- and call for elected strike committees, shop stewards committees and other organs responsible to the mass of workers to take it out of the hands of the TUC misleaders. Such a general strike is both necessary and possible. And in its victory it would not only strengthen the working class enormously and weaken the bureaucratic stranglehold of the Labourite leaders -- it could sharply increase the effect and weight in the labour movement of a principled and tactically intelligent revolutionary propaganda group, paving the way for a pre-revolutionary situation and the growth of a mass revolutionary workers party to lead the final assault on capitalist class rule.

It is on this central question of the construction of a revolutionary leadership and the road to workers rule that Workers Power too fails the test. Workers Power criticises the vague call to 'bring down the Tories' as playing 'into the hands of the TUC platform orators' who will use this slogan to liquidate the strike into a general election (*Workers Power*, February 1980). But it offers no alternative perspective except to explain that 'Councils of Action ... can become the fighting bodies for direct working class power'. When, how, through what programme it does not say. Even Workers Power's call for a 'general strike to smash the Tory union laws' is presented not as an immediate call to action but as a strategy -- a 'key policy' of a 'new leadership in the unions' (*Workers Power*, December 1979). This abstract policy guts the general strike call of its value as an urgently needed course of action for a particular situation in the class struggle.

For Workers Power, the steel strike, the general strike, the struggle for power are all seen as distinct and separate. In fact in its series of supplements issued to the steel strikers, the question of workers rule is not mentioned once. As for the general strike, the first supplement calls only for moving up the (subsequently sabotaged) one-day general strike in South Yorkshire from February 18 to coincide with a Welsh general strike on January 21. An indefinite general strike to smash the Employment Bill thus dwindles into a one-day protest action in two areas! Several of the subsequent supplements do not call for a general strike at all. The sterile, academic character of Workers Power's politics was captured by its intervention in last autumn's conference of the CDLM (the WSL's trade union front group), where it studiously refused to raise -- or even solidarise with the SL's attacks on -- Thornett's scabbing, preferring to debate about the exact formulation of a general strike call.

In reality Workers Power's

programme for the steel strike is a left version of the SWP's. It attacks the bureaucrat Scargill, but hails the 'rank and file' RSN as a 'potential alternative leadership' -- though they share the same reformist programme. It moans that 'Everything RSN has done to date [?!] will be wasted if they fail to start now to organise a national rank and file movement' (supplement no 5) -- a 'rank and file movement' which the next supplement explains could be based 'around the demands of 20% without strings, and No Sell-out'. Nowhere does it even attack RSN for failing to fight to extend the strike, much less to call for a general strike. And to unify the public and private sector workers, Workers Power calls for nationalising the private sector. To share bankruptcy?

A genuine alternative leadership in the steel unions, and throughout the workers movement, can only be built on the basis of the Transitional Programme, through a complete break with trade union economism and social-democratic Labourism. It is no accident that the SL was virtually unique among ostensibly Trotskyist organisations in refusing a vote to Labour in the last election, where it meant a vote for the Social Contract, a vote for the Lib-Lab coalition. Clinging to the bosom of the Labour Party and praying for the 'lefts' to 'fight', it is permissible to have friendly debates with cops, to mourn the fate of scabs, and to sneak past picket lines. But that polite chumminess which extends to cops, scabs, and Labour traitors does not extend to the Spartacist League, whose intransigent insistence on principle and programme and on merciless combat against all varieties of misleaders must-sometimes seem to the rest of the left like an infection of rabies.

Well, that is the sort of rabies Britain needs. Upon reading the SL leaflet to the Rotherham strike rally, one Stalinist militant remarked that he'd never seen such a good leaflet from 'Trots'. The truth is that most workers, like that Stalinist militant, have never seen genuine Trotskyism, the *Bolshevism* of today. To those steel workers who in the course of this long struggle have become convinced that this rotting edifice of capitalism must be ripped down, there is only one road forward: Fight for the programme of the Spartacist League, section of the international Spartacist tendency! ■

## 'Jehovah's Witnesses of the left'? SL pickets Ali/cop debate

Reprinted from Redbrick, Birmingham University student newspaper, 18 March 1980

By Catherine Emmott

THE SPARTACIST League has recently been responsible for the picket of a debate organised by the Guild. The debate was on the subject "Are the police unnecessarily brutal in enforcing the law?"

The main speakers were Gordon Meredith, chairman of the West Midlands Police Joint Board, and Tariq Ali, editor of "Socialist Challenge" and Leader of the International Marxist Group.

The Spartacist League is a Trotskyist organisation, and as such it supports the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. On campus, the Spartacists have been seen calling for support for the Steelworkers and collecting money on their behalf.

### THUGS

The Spartacists believe that

the police are "thugs in blue", who "make their points forcefully with batons, boots, and fists". They also feel that, throughout the steel strike, "the police have used every method at their disposal to help the bosses and the Government win".

This debate was described by the Spartacists as "an obscene spectacle", which was nothing more than "a public relations stunt by the cops"

This, however, overlooks the facts that, firstly, the event was organised by the Guild's Debating Society, and secondly, that both sides of the argument were being put forward. The police spokesman presented his views on the subject, while Tariq Ali cited examples of police brutality, some being from personal experience.

The pickets, about fifteen in all, congregated outside the Council Chamber in the Union.

Leader of the Spartacist League on campus, none of them appeared to be students. Their numbers gradually dwindled as, not being members of the Guild, they were asked to sign themselves into the building.

### CHANTING

The pickets carried banners and attempted -- with little success -- to dissuade students from entering the debate. Once the debate had begun they chanted loudly at intervals drowning the voices of the speakers.

Tariq Ali's opinion of the Spartacists is that they "discredit Socialism and Marxism", by behaving as "Jehovah's Witnesses of the Left". He believed that the issue of police brutality should be openly debated. He looked upon preventing any public discussion between two opposed parties as preventing free speech.

Spartacist Britain



Tariq Ali debating cop Meredith, Birmingham, February 29

New issue of Spartacist (theoretical journal of the iSt). Includes report and document from the first delegated conference of the iSt, and presentations on the fight against popular frontism.

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## Militant international solidarity

We reprint here telegrams sent by class-struggle trade unionists in America, members of union opposition groups politically supported by the Spartacist League (US).

[9 March 1980]  
Steel Strike Committee  
Sheffield Labour Hall  
Balfour Road, Attercliffe, Sheffield

Brothers and sisters, your strike critical struggle for workers around the world. Future of British trade-union movement at stake. In 1974 we called for boycotting scab coal. Today pledge fight against shipment of scab steel and coking coal to Britain. We stand ready to provide whatever assistance we can. You must not stand alone. For victory,

Militant-Solidarity Caucus, an opposition grouping of militant rank-and-file seamen in the National Maritime Union (US), PO Box 210, New York NY 10011

[22 March 1980]  
Dennis Kelly  
Chairman, Docks Shop Stewards Committee  
T&GWU  
37 Islington, Liverpool, England

Salute your courageous solidarity action in support steelworkers. We here calling for SF [San Francisco] port shut down in solidarity with striking US oil workers. Your example shows the way to smash Thatcher government's union busting attacks. Victory to steel strike.

Howard Keylor  
member ILWU Local 10 Executive Board  
Stan Gow  
member ILWU Local 10 Executive Board  
Bob Mandel  
member ILWU Local 6 General Executive Board

## Stay out and win...

(Continued from page 1)

lose pay. After ten weeks, the TGWU bureaucracy had finally directed the men not to handle any steel. If the bureaucrats cynically expected them not to take the directive seriously, to treat it as window-dressing for a renewed sell-out push, they were mistaken. At a mass meeting two days later, 4000 of the dockers voted -- with only two dissenting votes -- to continue the strike and demand a national dock strike.

The Liverpool dockers have provided a lead. Spreading the strike is the only answer to the threatened sellout -- not simply longer hours on the picket lines, not simply more militancy, or desperate manoeuvres born out of a sense of frustration and isolation, like the scheme floated of lifting all the 'safety cover'. The hours have been long enough and the militancy strong enough. What has been missing is a strategy to take this struggle into the rest of the working class, to urge them to come out, to give them a reason to come out -- even beyond simple class solidarity -- in defence of their own interests, to throw the whole Tory union-bashing, wage-slashing, job-destroying offensive reeling.

Whole sectors of the workforce are waiting for a lead. The steel workers can give them that lead. Leyland workers, 100,000 of them, are finally poised for national strike action on April 8 after months of criminal bureaucratic delays. The Liverpool dockers are still solidly in favour of a national dock strike -- and the national pay claim comes up May 1 anyway. Eight thousand Sheffield engineering workers made it clear that they are ready to strike when they walked out for a week in support of steel workers' picket lines. Delegates from Wales at a recent emergency NUM conference in London bitterly denounced the national and area leaderships for refusing to call out the miners alongside the steel workers. When the Spartacist League distributed a leaflet to the Liverpool dockers calling for general strike action, hundreds of them studied it carefully. Strike ac-



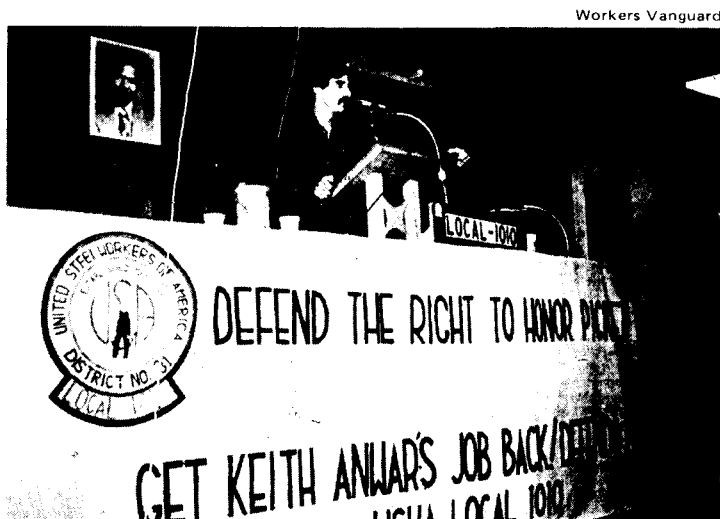
Traitors Len Murray, Bill Sirs and Hector Smith 'lead' March 9 TUC demonstration

tivists have reported that our leaflets calling for extending the strike have been avidly passed around from one picket shift to the next, from one strike committee to another. They want a general strike. Right now! *Steel workers: Don't let Bill Sirs lose it now!*

Here's a way to get it rolling: Load a hundred of the most militant strike activists from Yorkshire onto coaches bound for Liverpool. Tell the dockers you want them to stay out. Win them to broadening the demands of the strike -- against the wage cutting, the social service cuts, against the wave of redundancies and the Prior Bill, against the Tories' designs to make even a packet of fags or a pint of bitter lux-

## US steelworker fights victimisation

### Picket lines mean don't cross!



Keith Anwar addresses official steel union rally

Steel strikers in this country now know well that the battle lines in the class struggle, where the working class is defended -- or betrayed -- are the picket lines. In the United States a militant steel worker is right now waging a fight against the Inland Steel Company for the basic trade union right to honour picket lines. Keith Anwar, a member of the 19,000-strong Local 1010 of the United Steel Workers of America (USWA) was sacked last May 18 by Inland for refusing to cross the picket line of another USWA local at the East Chicago mill. He has launched a vigorous defence campaign to regain his job, and to defend the principles of union solidarity.

The Anwar campaign received immediate support from fellow workers -- and on June 30 the strategic USWA District 31, at its conference, unanimously passed a resolution backing his fight, 'defending all union members victimized for honouring picket lines', and demanding 'that Inland Steel reinstate Keith Anwar with full seniority and back pay'.

Anwar's own local endorsed this motion unanimously, and sponsored a rally in October in support of the right to honour picket lines, with Anwar as featured speaker. He told the rally: 'The weapons that built the union in the first place -- weapons like strike-support by mass picketing ... these weapons will have to come back.'

A member of Anwar's defence committee who spoke at the rally noted: 'When Keith says picket lines mean don't cross he's getting right to the heart of the matter.' The power of the picket lines is understood by the steelworkers who have rallied to Anwar's defence, contributed over \$1400 (mostly at plant gates) and forced the USWA district leadership to endorse his defence. Steel workers and other trade unionists in Britain can join the fight by sending messages of support to: The Keith Anwar Defence Committee, Box 7914, Chicago, Illinois 60680.

Defend Keith Anwar! Picket lines mean don't cross!

## Union militant sues over criminal assault

### Jane Margolis vs Carter's cops

Last July, Jimmy Carter's Secret Service invaded the Communications Workers of America (CWA) national conference in Detroit and dragged Jane Margolis, an elected delegate representing thousands of phone work workers, off the floor in front of hundreds of stunned and outraged delegates. This outrageous mugging occurred just one hour before the US president was due to address the conference.

Carter's thugs thought they could silence this well-known militant's challenge to his anti-labour, strike-breaking policies and get away with it. But the Secret Service was wrong. They underestimated Jane Margolis and they misjudged the mood of the labour movement. Immediately after she was seized over seven hundred phone workers signed telegrams of protest.

And Margolis is a fighter. She is a steward and Executive Board member in San Francisco CWA Local 9410, and for seven years she has been a leader of the class-struggle Militant Action Caucus (MAC) in the union. She was not going to let the Secret Service get away with their police state style attack on union rights. At a press conference in November Margolis announced that she was filing an unprecedented court suit against the Secret Service. As her complaint asserts, the case 'challenges in principle the government's interference with, and attempt to politically control, the trade union movement.'

CWA members have initiated the Union Committee Against Secret Service Harassment (UCASSH) to support the suit. UCASSH has already generated significant support: CWA locals from as far away as Illinois and Oregon have endorsed it, as have a number of other union locals, including California postal workers, typographers and electrical workers, and many individuals committed to trade union and democratic rights.

This is no ordinary lawsuit: the independence of the labour movement from coercive state control is at issue. The Partisan Defense Committee, which in accordance with the political aims of the Spartacist League, stands for the principles of anti-sectarian class struggle defence, has launched a major fund-raising campaign for the Margolis case and UCASSH: we call on militants in Britain to send contributions, and labour movement or individual endorsements to:

Union Campaign Against Secret Service Harassment (UCASSH)  
PO Box 12324  
San Francisco, California 94112 USA



Detroit 16 July, 1979: Secret Service thugs grab Jane Margolis

uries. Take a hundred of the most militant dockers and head for Hull. They've been striking one day a week anyway. Get them to join you. Add another hundred of them to the delegation and shut the Sheffield engineering works down again. Tell the officials that no procrastination and sabotage will be brooked -- make the strikes official.

One striker in Yorkshire said it: Miners don't cross picket lines. One picket outside any pit is all it takes to shut down a mine. Don't take any chances: send two pickets to each of 150 pits, in Wales, in Yorkshire, in Scotland -- call them out. Tell Scargill, McGahey and the rest to put their money where their mouths are. They want to support the steel workers? Do it -- call the miners out on strike!

Send coachloads to BL Longbridge, to Cowley, to Rovers, to Jaguar. They're facing massive attacks, why wait yet another week? Why fight on Edwardes' terms? Go out now! And then fill up the coaches with two thousand angry, militant steel workers, miners, dockers, engineering workers, car workers and take them all to Congress House in London. Tell Len Murray you're fed up -- no more backstabbing, no more sell-outs; you pay his salary, not Margaret Thatcher. Not one day in May, but all-out, indefinite general strike action now! He had better call it and make it official, because the strikers are going ahead anyway.

Elect an authoritative national steel strike committee, and link it up with the strike committees, stewards committees and other representative bodies in the other unions -- to coordinate the strikes, to organise the picketing, and to run the general strike. That's the only way to keep Murray and his mates from selling it out. You want to win -- that's the way to win! TUC: Call a general strike now!

What is needed now is a leadership, drawn from the most militant activists on the strike committees, to organise and implement such a course of action. It will take more than the *determination* to win that they have already so amply demonstrated. To lead this strike forward, militants must be clear on the obstacles, the diversions, the false strategies and the false friends. They must reject the road of arbitration -- the fight is won on the picket lines, not at the conference table. They must place not one ounce of confidence in Murray or Sirs -- or Scargill -- or any of the pro-capitalist union bureaucrats to carry through on promises. The national strike committee must directly oversee the struggle and the negotiations every step of the way.

They must repudiate the protectionist strategy of import controls pushed by Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill -- the 'Buy British' line of Michael Edwardes and the bosses. Import controls will not save jobs. They are a reactionary fraud which can only set British worker against foreign as other governments retaliate and trade war sets in. And trade war, especially with a major recession getting underway and exacerbating the rivalries between imperialist countries, can pave the way to *real* imperialist war. Protectionism is not simply an 'alternative' to class struggle and international working class solidarity -- it is counterposed to them. It means lining up *with* the bosses instead of against them. And the *counterposition* could be clearly seen at the special NUM conference. The choice was between do-nothing pleas for import controls and militant calls for strike action.

The policies of the Labour and trade union traitors are to sell out strikes, defend capi-

## Corrections

In our article on Spartacist League (SL) steel strike support work last issue (no 19, March 1980), we reported that International Marxist Group members on Birmingham University refused to sign an SL-initiated petition for a student general meeting on the steel strike. The article should have stated that the IMGers, while formally signing the petition, refused to circulate it.

The article 'Out of the centrist swamp' in the same issue contains an ambiguous passage implying that several steel workers walked out of a Workers Socialist League public meeting in Sheffield in solidarity with SL and Leninist Faction interventions which exposed WSL leader Alan Thornett's scabbing on the national engineering strike of last summer. In fact these strikers did not actually leave the meeting under the impact of the SL/LF interventions. For the details about Thornett's disgraceful role in the engineering strike, see issue no 15, October 1979.



Spartacist League calls for 'General Strike Now!' at TUC demonstration, March 9

talist rule and lead the workers into inter-imperialist slaughter. The only real perspective for saving jobs and defending workers' livelihoods in bankrupt Britain is to get rid of this doddering anarchic capitalist system. But the reformist bureaucrats will do anything except that, and will do anything to avoid that, so committed are they to preserving the few crumbs the bosses throw them. While the Tories swing their axe, all the Labour Party and TUC are prepared to do is organise a few cuts demonstrations, and the Sunday outing of March 9 against the Employment Bill. The threat of a general strike frightens the hell out of them. And Len Murray made no bones about revealing the reason when he explained to the press why he couldn't bring himself to call the May 14 'day of action' a general strike:

'Mr Murray said he was not planning a strike to bring down the Government, adding: "I don't think the British people would tolerate that for one moment. If we did that we would not know what to do with the power we had got."' (Guardian, 19 March 1980)

How much longer does Murray expect the British people to tolerate 'third world' living standards, 'hypothermia' and the ceaseless disruption to daily life caused by a stalemated

class struggle. The choice staring British workers in the face is to fight for communism or see the despair of the middle classes feed the growth of a movement of fascist reaction. And the workers will know what to do with the power when they get it -- rebuild the cities, restore transport services, provide proper education and health care facilities.

Steel workers must fight to turn their strike into a general strike now not only to win but to provide a dramatic impetus to the struggle for a revolutionary leadership on the road to the proletarian seizure of power. The determination and militancy tempered by thirteen weeks on the front lines of the class war -- if linked to a programme for victory -- has given them a historic opportunity to lead their class in struggle. The road forward is clear; the moment is now. STEEL WORKERS: STAY OUT AND WIN! REJECT THE SELLOUT! FIGHT FOR A GENERAL STRIKE!■

For free copies of Spartacist League leaflets and supplements distributed amongst steelworkers, carworkers, miners, dockers -- send sae to:

Spartacist Publications  
PO Box 185  
London WC1H 8JE

## Mugabe...

(Continued from page 12)

particularly given Mugabe's commitment to repaying the loans floated by South Africa to finance Smith's blood-thirsty seven-year-long war against the nationalist forces. As the election returns demonstrated, by a dramatic split along tribal lines, there remains the danger of inter-tribal bloodletting. And there is also the possibility that the 220,000-strong white-settler caste, threatened by the 'africanisation' of white-collar and government jobs, will yet attempt to redeem the 'scorched earth' promises made for more than a decade.

In every respect the 'Marxist' Mugabe has demonstrated in no uncertain terms that he is a loyal lackey for imperialism -- from his 'good neighbour' policy towards South Africa; to his appointment of Smith's butcher, Lieutenant-General Peter Walls, to head up the army; to his invitation to his 'good friend' Lord Soames to stay on after independence; and most graphically, to the recent strikebreaking. With remarkable rapidity, Mugabe has wiped away virtually any veneer of the 'radicalism' in which the petty-bourgeois black nationalists cover their role as representatives of the exploiters of African labour.

Yet that did not prevent the fake-Trotskyist International Marxist Group (IMG) from enthusiastically hailing Mugabe's election as a 'Victory', implicitly accepting his two-stage -- or rather, three-stage -- schema in which even the dismantling of the racist regime, much less 'socialism', is postponed for a later time. In enumerating the dangers to 'the Zimbabwean Revolution' (led by whom -- 'Comandante' Peter Walls?), *Socialist Challenge* (27 March) solemnly opines that 'An immense responsibility faces the ZANU leadership', mentioning but failing to attack ZANU's moves to break the strikes. On the contrary, fresh from its experience as adviser to the petty-bourgeois Nicaraguan FSLN -- which at least led some kind of a *revolution* -- the IMG counsels sagely: 'At some point [!] the sacking of General Walls, a purging of the top civil servants, and the removal of the white capitalist ministers will be necessary.'

This caricatures even the Stalinists' 'peaceful road to socialism'. And as for the black capitalist ministers, the Mugabes and Kangais, the IMG has scandalously dropped any pretence of class opposition and the Trotskyist programme of permanent revolution. When the audience at a 21 March London IMG rally for Hugo Blanco murmured uneasily in response to Tariq Ali's implicit defence of Mugabe's 'concessions', Ali shot back:

'It is all very easy for a group of sectarians in a hall in London... What would you have done if you had gained power in Zimbabwe, with the South Africans right across the border.'

Marxists would certainly not break strikes and accommodate to white supremacy and imperialist finance capital. The IMG's disdain for Trotskyism could not be more clearly stated. The only hope for the Zimbabwean masses lies on the road of permanent revolution, through a revolutionary upsurge centred on the 5 million-strong proletariat of South Africa which would sweep away not only that bastion of apartheid terror but the neo-colonialist remnants of imperialist domination throughout southern Africa. To be sure an isolated workers state in Zimbabwe with an unchallenged apartheid regime next door could not maintain itself for more than the short term. But a black workers revolution which began in Zimbabwe, led by a Trotskyist party, would almost certainly detonate a mass upsurge by the powerful South African proletariat.

The current strike wave is more than a reflection of a 'crisis of expectations'. It is a reminder of the power of the proletariat once it embarks on a course of independent mass action. And the response of Mugabe's ZANU is a stern warning that, as we have consistently warned, these petty-bourgeois nationalists in power 'will show themselves implacable class enemies of the African proletariat' (*Spartacist Britain* no 13, July 1979). Under the leadership of a Trotskyist vanguard party, the strikers who have today demonstrated their readiness to enter the field of battle against the imperialist exploiters and their black front men would link arms with their class brothers south of the Limpopo to crush underfoot every last vestige of imperialist exploitation and racist oppression.■

# SPARTACIST

## BRITAIN

### Smash Edwardes' union-busting rampage

# BL: Strike now!

Sir Michael Edwardes is trying to break the unions at BL. First came his 'recovery plan', which meant 40,000 Leyland workers out on the streets over the next two years, then the sacking of Communist Party Longbridge convenor Derek Robinson -- now Edwardes threatens to unilaterally impose a draconian pay/productivity package upon threat of a lockout. In the past six months this industrial ayatollah has already gone further to strip Leyland unions of basic rights than the Iron Lady's wildest dreams. And the only reason he has got this far is the abject cowardice and treachery of the union misleaders.

Finally, on March 27, the BL Cars' Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) representing the eleven unions at Leyland declared a national

strike to begin on April 8, the day Edwardes' new plan is supposed to go into effect. The bureaucrats still want to play for time, hoping to avoid the possibility of a powerful link-up with the three-month-long steel workers' strike -- or even to sell out altogether before the deadline is reached. 'Sir Michael Edwardes took a gamble and we are prepared to call his bluff this time', said TGWU official and JNC head Grenville Hawley. But, he added carefully, 'We still hope there will not be a strike' (*Times*, 27 March).

Michael Edwardes is not just bluffing; and Leyland workers must not wait for Hawley's 'hopes' to materialise. The very existence of their unions as organisations with any power to defend jobs and working conditions is at stake.

Every BL plant across the country must be shut down *immediately* through national strike action, coupled with occupations to make it clear that Edwardes' threats of plant closures are not on. A national strike at Leyland right now could do much more than reverse Edwardes' anti-union juggernaut. It would inject new life into the valiant steel workers' strike, and through co-ordinated action with the steelmen and the striking Liverpool dockers be a giant step towards the general strike which is so urgently needed to reverse the Tory offensive on workers' jobs, living standards and union organisations.

The alternative is grim. Three thousand workers have already been tossed on the scrap-heap under Edwardes' redundancy scheme, with

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## Strike wave hits Zimbabwe

# Mugabe: Imperialism's new friend

In sweeping Robert Mugabe's ZANU (PF) slate to an unexpected landslide victory, the nearly three million blacks who went to the polls in Rhodesia at the end of February demonstrated their hatred for white-supremacist rule. When the results were announced Salisbury factories and offices emptied out as black workers took the day off to celebrate. In the black townships the streets overflowed with exultant spontaneous demonstrations. Young black men and women cheered, danced, flapped elbows for the cock (the ZANU symbol) and gave clenched-fist salutes. Across the border in South Africa as well there was dancing in the streets of the black townships, an indication of the anti-apartheid conflagration a black uprising in Zimbabwe could spark.

But even before being officially installed as prime minister, Mugabe has moved quickly and dramatically to shatter the misplaced hope that his 'new Zimbabwe' will offer the black masses any solace from exploitation and oppression. Less than two weeks after the election, the country was hit by a wave of black workers' strikes -- the first significant upsurge of strike action in five years. Within days the walkouts and go-slows spread to nearly 30 plants and mines in the country's five main centres, involving more than ten thousand workers. The reported demands of the strikers have varied widely -- wage increases, refunds of contributions to pension funds which are rumoured to be facing 'nationalisation', an end to victimisations, even a shorter working week.

The imperialist press fretted about a 'crisis of expectations'. And whatever the demands and the origins of the particular strikes, it is clear that after decades of brutal colonialist and white-supremacist subjugation, after the charade of 'black majority rule' imposed by Ian Smith's black front-man Bishop Abel Muzorewa, the black workers and peasants want far more



Jubilant crowds celebrate Mugabe's victory—they won't cheer for long

than vague promises for the future. One of the demands raised in the strikes has been for the implementation of the minimum wage of R\$75 (£52) per month mooted by the Muzorewa regime last year -- right now the average wage for black workers in manufacturing industry is R\$60 per month, one-tenth that of whites.

Mugabe responded by denouncing the strikes as a 'disturbing trend' and 'quite inexcusable'. As even the *Economist* (29 March) noted, 'it could have been Ian Smith talking'. Indeed it was not just Ian Smith's language but Ian Smith's laws that this 'radical' appealed to. Mugabe's designated minister of labour, ZANU

'left' Kumbirai Kangai, called upon Smith's industrial legislation in an attempt to end the strike wave. 'There is a laid down procedure for the airing of workers' grievances', insisted Kangai -- the laid down procedure being that strikes are effectively illegal. Kangai made a tour of strike-hit plants to lecture the workers on the responsibilities of 'liberation': 'Discipline at work must remain part and parcel of the freedom we have attained' (*Times*, 22 March).

After two weeks, the strike wave appeared to have dissipated substantially -- in no small part because of ruthless company victimisations encouraged by the incoming government. At Dalny Mines, 1500 workers were threatened with dismissal if they did not return to work immediately; another 900 strikers at the Bata Shoe Company received a similar warning. Within a week more than 750 strikers had been dismissed. Eight hundred workers at the Rhodesia Omnibus Company in Bulawayo who walked out over the victimisation of five black workers returned on the basis of a compromise arranged by Kangai, in which three of the five were rehired.

Even if this strike wave subsides, Mugabe faces more than enough challenges to his new regime. The country remains a tinderbox, ready to explode on any one of a number of fronts. The economy lies in ruins and one million rural Africans have been displaced. But Mugabe's campaign pledge to redistribute land -- a key question in Zimbabwe -- has already been placed in doubt with the announcement by the new minister of agriculture (and elected leader of the country's 5400 well-off white farmers), Denis Norman, that commercially viable, ie white, farms are to be left untouched.

Then there are the tens of thousands of former guerrillas who expect to be part of the new army, an army Zimbabwe can hardly afford --

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