

Australasian

# SPARTACIST



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THIRTY CENTS

## Afghanistan:

# Victory to Red Army!



Red Army soldiers on the frontier between Afghanistan and Pakistan — many are from Soviet Central Asian republics.

Washington is talking war. Jimmy Carter threatens US military action against the Soviet Union in the Persian Gulf in his "state of the union" speech on 23 January. The Pentagon's war budget soars, a fleet of five aircraft carriers patrols the Indian Ocean, and leaked documents reveal Pentagon contingency plans to use tactical nuclear weapons against the USSR in the Persian Gulf. Western Europe gets new nuclear missiles aimed at Russia's major cities. After years of being led on by the US in endless, fruitless SALT negotiations, the Kremlin sees its futile attempt to achieve "detente" with US imperialism shattered

### Smash Carter/Fraser war drive!

### Defend USSR!

by a series of blatant provocations. No wonder the Russians are fed up.

Imperialist madman Carter is making "Cold War II" over the Soviet intervention into Afghanistan, but his anti-Soviet war drive began long before. It was always the aim of his "human rights" crusade to morally re-arm post-Vietnam America for imperialist war, as

we of the international Spartacist tendency have warned repeatedly. US collusion in China's invasion of Vietnam last year sealed the US/China anti-Soviet alliance in Vietnamese blood. He even hijacked an Aeroflot airliner at New York's Kennedy airport for 72 hours last August, trying to strong-arm Bolshoi ballerina Ludmilla Vlasova into "defect-

ing". And the next month he raised a storm over a few Soviet troops in Cuba who had been there for 15 years.

The otherwise fake uproar over Afghanistan has as its real target the Soviet degenerated workers state. The US aims to restore its position of world imperialist dominance by smashing the Soviet Union and its collectivised economy. Thus today, the Russian question is posed pointblank for revolutionaries: for the unconditional military defence of the gains of the October Revolution!

There is something particularly insane about the raving of Carter and his  
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## Muslim/Maoist knife attack:

# Attempted murder of German Spartacist

FRANKFURT — A near-fatal knife wound left German Spartacist spokesman Fred Zierenberg fighting for his life in a Frankfurt hospital. The premeditated murder attack occurred January 25 at a teach-in on Afganistan called by the Frankfurt University student association. In the cold-blooded assault by several dozen Afghan mullah-lovers and their "leftist" allies — Turkish Maoists and members of the "Fight Back" organisation of American soldiers from the US volunteer army stationed in West Germany — several members of the Trotskistische Liga Deutschlands (TLD — Trotskyist League of Germany) were badly hurt.

The attackers concentrated on the

leader of the TLD intervention, Comrade Zierenberg, jumping him and knifing him in the back. As a result of internal haemorrhaging Zierenberg's right lung partially collapsed and he had to be operated on to save his life. He remained in critical condition for four days. A second TLD comrade was beaten unconscious while a third was knifed in the abdomen. In the flurry of knives, fists and boots, other comrades received less dangerous injuries. But Zierenberg, a 31-

year old radio-TV technician and father who has been a trade unionist for ten years, remained in intensive care for over a week. Criminal charges are being brought against the assailants, whose carefully planned attack was intended to maim and kill.

The TLD had been granted five minutes speaking time at the teach-in by the student association (ASTa) chairman. Islamic fanatics of the General Union of Afghan Students (GUAFS) and their

friends of the Turkish Maoist group ATIF/ATOF had sought to inflame the audience with chants of "Death to Trotskyism!" When the TLD speaker attempted to come forward to the podium, goons ganged up behind our comrades while others blocked the stairs to the platform. At least four thugs were sent after each TLD supporter and then, at a signal from the "Fight Back" group, the homicidal attack was launched. Knives were employed against the men while the TLD speaker, a woman, was savagely kicked in the abdomen. Our comrades managed to fight their way out of the hall. After regrouping, they withdrew chanting "Down with NATO, Hail Red Army!"  
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# Imperialist troops out!

# Nationalist treachery in Rhodesia

Margaret Thatcher's proconsul Lord Soames brought British colonial rule back to Rhodesia on 12 December, to the strains of a Salisbury police band playing the "March of the British South Africa Police" and "God Save the Queen". For this atrocity the black masses have to thank not the white Rhodesian colons who, led by planter Ian Smith, broke from Britain 15 years ago in the cause of unadulterated white supremacy, but the virtually unparalleled treachery of Rhodesia's petty-bourgeois black nationalists. After tens of thousands of their followers have died fighting for a black Zimbabwe, it was the "anti-imperialist" leaders of the Patriotic Front who brought back the British colonial master in a bid for governmental seats in the new imperialist-devised "settlement".

During more than three months of negotiations at the end of last year Thatcher's foreign minister Lord Carrington blackmailed, bribed and hoodwinked his way to an agreement between Smith's white racist regime, with its black front man Muzorewa, and the willing capitulators of the Patriotic Front, Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe. Nkomo and Mugabe made concession after concession: guarantees against the expropriation of capitalists or white farmers (some 5000 of whom own 80 percent of the country's arable land); a constitution which grants the whites — 4 percent of the population — 20 percent of the parliamentary seats and virtually forbids amendments for 10 years; the continuation of white control of the army and police; and finally a transition period in which these murderous "security forces" remain intact while the guerrillas set themselves up for bloody massacre by leaving the bush and dumping their guns in the "assembly point" concentration camps established.

Under a constitution preserving white domination, the elections scheduled for the end of February can only be a fraud. Nor will they end the civil war which daily threatens to break out into open fighting again. Whereas Carrington had "promised" that the estimated 2000-6000 South African troops fighting with Smith's forces would be out before Soames arrived, Soames openly approved their

remaining. The army commanded by the butcher General Walls has been given the run of the country to fight supposed guerrilla cease-fire "violations".

And in a recent ominous move Soames ordered Walls' troops to new bases near the area in which Mugabe's forces are concentrated. At the same time he has given himself the power to break up political meetings, outlaw political parties or ban them from the elections, and disenfranchise whole areas to avoid "intimidation" of voters! Meanwhile, in the northern Transvaal just south of the Limpopo river, the white army of South African prime minister Botha is reportedly ready to invade, if necessary, to protect its racist capitalist interests.

Following Soames into the country was a 1200-strong armed "monitoring force" of imperialist Commonwealth troops, including a contingent of 100 Australian soldiers. Fraser criss-crosses the globe as a front-man for Jimmy Carter, raving about "Soviet aggression" in Afghanistan. But you won't hear him or the capitalist media talking about "poor little independent Rhodesia", where this genuine imperialist incursion is taking place. No wonder: Fraser's anti-Sovietism and his willingness to send troops to prop up Rhodesia's white supremacist mass murderers is motivated by the same filthy capitalist interests. But disgustingly, Mugabe and Nkomo have both demanded that the "monitoring force" be made larger! On January 21 Nkomo told an interviewer, "there should be 10,000 Commonwealth troops here instead of 1300" (*Newsweek*, 4 February)!

## Patriotic Front: Imperialists' neo-colonial option

Britain's effort to deal the Patriotic Front leaders into the Salisbury political game is not mere imperialist trickery. The clearer heads in London and Washington know that the thin and shrinking layer of 230,000 settler-colonial whites is sure to be swept from power one day by Rhodesia's seven million blacks. Their aim is to prevent the "destabilisation" of Rhodesia while continuing to shore up apartheid South Africa as the main imperialist bulwark on the continent. And as Angola showed in 1975-6, imperialism will block militarily with Pretoria to defend its threatened interests.

If the white supremacists are forced to retreat into the last *lager* beyond the Limpopo, the imperialists want to ensure that the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia they leave behind is safe for capitalist exploitation. Not the colour of the regime in Salisbury but its attitude to property — that is the question which preoccupies imperialism most. But on that score Mugabe and Nkomo are willing to oblige, both pledging fealty to "free enterprise". Mugabe has additionally announced his desire for "coexistence" and "a close commercial and logistic relationship with South Africa" (*Guardian Weekly*, 3 February 1980).

Despite the hue and cry of Smith and Botha about the "Marxist" Mugabe, both he and Nkomo are aspiring black bourgeois bonapartes who, in power, would quickly reveal themselves as vicious enemies of the working masses. But Smith's recent expression of preference for Nkomo (throwing the now discredited Muzorewa into a fit at being so casually dropped) reflects a difference at the base: Mugabe's ZANLA guerrillas have done most of the fighting against Salisbury over the years and are esti-

mated to number up to three times as many as Nkomo's ZIRPA.

Nor is it clear that Mugabe can control his forces if he moves too far toward accommodation with Smith or Soames. Even before the cease-fire, his field commanders complained bitterly about giving up their key military advantage as a guerrilla force and exposing themselves to the enemy for a handful of nothing. On top of that, the Mugabe/Nkomo betrayal came when the Smith/Muzorewa regime was teetering. The ZANLA guerrillas rightly fear to see defeat snatched from the jaws of their victory.

What can the fake-lefts of all kinds, who have eagerly tailed the "anti-imperialist" Nkomo and Mugabe for years, say to the guerrillas who have been so monstrously betrayed? The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) says to follow the traitors. But not in the manner of New Left Third Worldists clinging to their heroes; no, the SWP's brazen apologetics for the Patriotic Front sellout reflects the orientation of liberal imperialism — and culminates in a shameful call for *imperialist intervention*, this time "in support of" the would-be imperialist lackeys Nkomo and Mugabe.

*Direct Action* (13 December 1979) had Steve Painter, one of the SWP's perpetual candidates for yet-to-be-announced elections, explaining how "the Patriotic Front had the right" to demand that "[the cease-fire] be enforced by troops who would defend the rights of the Zimbabwean people" — ie the Commonwealth troops! — "because they've been driven into a corner and have very little choice". "Here in Australia", he went on, the SWP can raise "demands that express the needs of the Zimbabwean people much more fully" like "Imperialism out of Zimbabwe!" or "No Australian troops for Zimbabwe!" Then he concludes by demanding: "that the Australian government provide military and economic aid to the Patriotic Front" (our emphasis)!

During the Vietnam war the SWP's American mentors sought to prove them-

selves as waterboys for the liberal wing of US imperialism with the patriotic demand, "Bring our boys home and send them to Alabama", where they could only have helped put down militant blacks during the height of the Civil Rights movement. Now the SWP wants Fraser to send "our boys" to Rhodesia in the service of black neo-colonialism instead of white supremacy.

Unlike the imperialists, the white Rhodesians have a very direct stake in the maintenance of their rule in the country — their land, their swimming pools, their servants and profits wrung from black workers paid on average one-eleventh of a white man's wage. Walls' army of white supremacy is undoubtedly waiting for the right time to deliver a crushing blow to the guerrillas exposed as a result of the cease-fire. Fighting could easily be set off again by more atrocities against the Patriotic Front forces such as the cold-blooded murder last month of seven of Nkomo's followers by Rhodesian troops or the "accidental" killing of ZANLA general Josiah Tongogara; by a post-election alliance between Muzorewa, Sithole and Smith to keep Mugabe and/or Nkomo out of the government; by an armed South African intervention; or even by a split away from the Patriotic Front by elements unable to stomach this gross betrayal. Should open warfare resume, Marxists will call as before for military victory of the nationalist forces and the smashing of the white supremacists' rule. But we place absolutely no confidence in the proven traitors who lead the Patriotic Front.

Imperialist troops out of Rhodesia! Thatcher/Soames out of Rhodesia! No deals with Smith, Walls and their black frontmen! White racist rule in Rhodesia must be smashed! But only a Trotskyist party of the black proletariat, built on the program of permanent revolution and forging links with the powerful black working class of South Africa, can lead the toiling masses to victory in the struggle to regain their birthright through socialist revolution in Rhodesia and throughout southern Africa. ■

## To our readers and supporters

This, our seventy-first *Australasian Spartacist*, is taking a leap forward. New typesetting and production equipment makes it possible for us to continue producing the only genuine Trotskyist paper in Australia in a new, improved format. Costing close to \$6000, these improvements were made possible largely by a fund drive among readers and supporters which handsomely exceeded its goal of \$2000 in four weeks late last year. Rising costs unfortunately dictate a ten-cent price increase now as well, but this should help us produce more pages per issue this year.

Not a high pressure money-squeezing gimmick, our fund drive tapped the loyalty of the many supporters the paper has built up in six years of uncompromising struggle for Trotskyism — people who will turn out to demonstrate or distribute a leaflet; militants involved in trade-union, picket line, women's and student struggles; and long-time subscribers and friends. And it was a success. Our appreciative revolutionary greetings go with this issue to all those who made it possible.

These supporters knew that *Australasian Spartacist* had to continue and grow. Where else can you get the *truth* on the fall of Somoza in Nicaragua, Khomeini's Iran, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, "boat people", the *Deer Hunter*, how the Stalinists planned Trotsky's murder or Alexandra Kollontai and the Russian Revolution? And not just the truth, but hard-hitting polemics against the fake "left" both domestic and international, and a revolutionary program for proletarian state power? Certainly not in the deadly-dull pages of our parochial reformist competitors. The Australian workers movement needs *Australasian Spartacist*, and confident of your continued support, we look forward to its further improvement as a vital weapon in the struggle for a revolutionary workers party and the rebirth of the Fourth International.

Australasian

**SPARTACIST** 

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# International Womens Day 1980

They marched 100,000 strong, chanting: "We will fight the veil!", "Down with Khomeini!", "Down with the dictatorship!" The reactionary mullahs who had swept into power the previous month answered them with bullets. Yet again and again in the days following, tens of thousands of Iranian women and their male supporters braved the stones, knives and bullets of the Islamic reactionaries to demand the right to appear in public without the stifling head-to-toe *chador* and to protest the reinstatement of the old Muslim code of feudal slavery for women. This was the first open battle between Khomeini and opponents of Islamic fundamentalism: March 8, 1979 — International Women's Day in Teheran.

Today the ayatollah remains in power, his absolute authority enshrined in the new constitution of his "Islamic Republic". The ranks of his victims have swollen: the Kurds, the Arabs, the Azerbaijanis; the left and striking workers have all had to face the wrath of this feudal reactionary caste. In Afghanistan, reactionary feudalists backed by Khomeini and the CIA are likewise fighting to establish bloody Islamic rule throughout the country and reverse the social reforms of the Kabul government. In this battle, revolutionaries stand on the side of the Soviet Red Army, on the side of those fighting to eliminate bride-price and the slavery of women.

But even after a year of mullah power in Iran, the opportunist left continues to back Islamic reaction. The International Socialists (IS) proved demonstratively that it had no program for women's emancipation when it uncritically hailed the rise to power of Khomeini last year. That support cooled down as the results of the Imam's rule became visible even to the blind. But one year later the IS is again standing alongside those who advocate the oppression of women. Its scandalous call for the military victory of the feudal and tribal forces fighting the Red Army forces in Afghanistan means it stands for the victory of a reactionary crew of mullahs, khans and money-lenders who value women only for the amount of dowry they fetch. This is the real meaning of their "socialism".

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in contrast has announced its support of the Red Army incursion. But without blinking an eyelid the SWP serves this up as *consistent* with its line of support to the anti-Soviet mullahs in neighbouring Iran. These shameless opportunists not only hailed the "Iranian Revolution" at the height of its popularity in 1978 and early 1979, but have steadfastly continued to hail Islamic reaction *in power*. Even when fourteen of their own comrades of the now split HKS were thrown in jail, they maintained the Iranian masses never had it so good. Most recently the SWP's co-thinkers ran for "president" under the Imam's theocratic constitution in support of the "students following the Imam's line" in the occupied US embassy.

But what could be more cynical, particularly coming from a group which not so long ago was knee-deep in the feminist movement, than the piece in the 17 January *Direct Action* which declared:

"Women are freer than ever before in Iran...."

"A lot has been said in the media about the wearing of the *chador* — the veil assigned to women in many Moslem societies — as proof of reaction in Iran...."

"Some women who never wore the veil are now doing so as a symbol of national liberation. Some wear it in opposition to western dress styles that turn women into sex objects. Some have chosen not to wear it."

"Chosen"?! What choice is there for women in a country where if they don't wear the veil they will be stoned to death? Where mixed bathing, extra-marital sex, alcohol, popular music and the wearing of blue jeans are outlawed on the say-so of a dying religious fanatic?

Perhaps these bans too are, like the veil, "symbols of national liberation"? If so, why not extend the list: perhaps clitorectomies, the removal of the entire clitoris and labia minora to achieve



Iranian women and Fedayeen: "No to the veil!", March 1979.

## Defend women, smash Islamic reaction

marital fidelity through surgical frigidity, are symbols of liberation also? Or infibulation, in which the vagina is sewn up with the exception of a small hole through which the woman is supposed to menstruate? Why shouldn't the SWP hail these practices, still extant in parts of Africa, as an expression of opposition to "Western imperialist values"? They perform a social function analogous to that of the veil: namely, ensuring that women are "untouched" (and therefore marketable) before marriage and faithful to their lord and master afterwards.

The SWP will claim that such characterisations of Islam in power are "imperialist lies". What then do they make of *Khomeini's own statements* such as those he made in an interview with Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci — who was forced to wear a *chador* in his presence?

"Fallaci: Is it right to shoot the poor prostitute or a woman who is unfaithful to her husband or a man who loves another man?"

"Khomeini: If your finger suffers from gangrene, what do you do? Do you let the whole hand, and then the body, become filled with gangrene or do you cut the finger off?..."

"Fallaci: Take the case of the pregnant 18-year old who was shot at Beshar a few weeks ago, for adultery."

"Khomeini: Pregnant? Lies, lies...."

"Fallaci: They are not lies, Imam. All the Iranian newspapers have reported the news, and a debate was held on television because her lover was only given a hundred lashes."

"Khomeini: If that is true, it means she got what she deserved. What do I know about particulars?..."

— *New York Times Magazine*,  
7 October 1979

It is not the Spartacist League which lies, but the SWP. And far from being "racist" as the SWP claims, telling the truth about the reality of life in those countries exploited and oppressed by imperialism undercuts chauvinism. The medieval practices which have endured in Iran are a product of the fact that the development of the economy which took place in western Europe in the 16th through 19th century was prevented from taking place there, precisely because the

country was subjugated and held in backwardness by the colonial and imperialist powers. The social foundations of Khomeini's barbarism are thus at bottom the responsibility of the imperialist world order. And only a proletarian revolution can eradicate and destroy these feudal vestiges.

### Women's liberation through socialist revolution

International Women's Day 1980 should be first and foremost a demonstration of solidarity with the women, national minorities and working masses of Iran. It should be the occasion to welcome and defend the Red Army incursion into Afghanistan against Islamic reaction, an opportunity to oppose the war-mongering imperialist frenzy against the Soviet degenerated workers state where, despite Stalin's reversal of many of the gains of the October Revolution, the position of women in Soviet Central Asia remains qualitatively superior to that of any Islamic state.

But for most of the Australian left and feminist movement, IWD 1980 will not be used to raise any of these demands. Instead of celebrating the day as a proletarian holiday, sections of the moribund women's liberation movement are going to wave the banner of the early 20th century suffragette movement while others march to "reclaim the night" in a reactionary echo of the anti-pornography crusaders in the Festival of Light.

What an insult! To celebrate International Women's Day wrapped in the purple, green and white colours of those jingoistic British chauvinists Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst is to spit in the face of the women garment workers of New York, among whom the holiday originated in 1908, and of the women textile workers of Petrograd whose strike on March 8, 1917 signalled the beginning of the Russian Revolution. For what the bourgeois leaders of the suffragette movement should be remembered for is their support for the imperialist slaughter of World War I. They even jettisoned the struggle for women's suffrage, in the cause of the war against "the Hun".

August 4, 1914 exploded the myth of a "classless" feminism which unites all women in a struggle against their common oppression. And it is a telling comment on the class character of feminist ideology that yesterday's radical feminists now stand under the banner of a movement whose campaign for suffrage reform was combined with fervent defence of capitalist property. In like manner, those who march "against porn" and call on the repressive bourgeois state to outlaw it altogether only *strengthen* the capitalist class in its attacks on the democratic rights of the oppressed.

It is not men, sexist advertising or skin-flicks which constitute the source of women's oppression, but the bourgeois nuclear family and the whole system of capitalist property which requires and perpetuates household slavery. In backward countries like Iran and Afghanistan the liberation of women takes the bloody form of a life and death question. Unlike women in the capitalist west, the women of these countries have not had the benefit of a bourgeois revolution to establish their status as human beings. To struggle for even this gain runs up against feudal and semi-feudal backwardness which can only be smashed through proletarian revolution. Likewise to end the oppression of women in advanced capitalist societies a victorious socialist revolution is needed, a revolution which will uproot and eradicate the material conditions of poverty, want and stultifying domestic labour that underpin that oppression. The banner of women's liberation is not the purple, green and white of bourgeois feminism but the red banner of communism, the banner of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, upheld today by the Spartacist League. That offers a way forward for women, as for all humanity. ■

## Free Amanda Wilbraham!

Amanda Wilbraham, a sixteen year old girl, faces the gallows in Western Australia. Systematically harassed by Charles Court's cops since being put on probation for her alleged involvement in a hotel fight, Wilbraham last year rounded on her tormentors in a fit of desperation and shot a cop dead. For this act she was found guilty of murder on 1 November and was sentenced to be hanged. If it is carried out, Amanda Wilbraham will be the youngest person ever executed in this former penal colony.

This outrageous decision must be opposed! The last person to be hanged in Australia, Ronald Ryan, died amid a storm of protest, including an attempt by wharfies to storm the Victorian parliament, in February 1967. The labour movement today must stop this judicial killing from starting again.

The neanderthals of the WA cabinet are to "review" her case 18 February and may well decide to commute the sentence to life imprisonment in the face of widespread opposition including Amnesty International. Held under 24-hour guard in solitary confinement in the maximum security wing of Bandyup Women's Prison since 1 November, Amanda Wilbraham has already undergone inhuman torture for an act which was that of a persecuted victim driven to distraction. The bourgeoisie may decide not to hang this teenager, but they still seek their pound of flesh: "... let her punishment be civilised", intoned the Sydney *Daily Mirror* (15 February). Life in prison — civilised? The Spartacist League says: Let her go! She has had enough of the bourgeoisie's "civilised punishment". Abolish the death penalty — free Amanda Wilbraham now!

# Fairfax, Phillip Morris — Picket lines mean don't cross

Throughout the entire world, there is nothing so basic to the labour movement as the picket line. In spite of the myriad differences in workers' history in different countries and regions, *all* labour movements *must* at bottom be based on the ability to withdraw labour effectively. Whether or not they are often used in strike struggles, strike pickets are a universal weapon for making a strike effective: they are the battle lines of the class struggle, or, as Leon Trotsky put it, "the basic nuclei of the proletarian army". Cops, scabs and company-union finks are to be found on one side of a picket line, and genuine unionists on the other; and that is the only way it *can* be. For any good unionist, "I never cross picket lines" is a universal axiom.

This was graphically shown in two recent hard-fought strikes in Sydney and Melbourne. Printing workers at John Fairfax & Sons in Sydney struck for two weeks in January, and maintenance tradesmen at Philip Morris' cigarette factory in Melbourne were out for seven hard weeks over Christmas. Both struggles were marked by militant pickets, and both ended in partial victories for the strikers — but only after weeks of struggle, lost wages, arrests (in the case of Fairfax) and the resulting wear and tear on the unionists involved. And the reason for that was that in neither instance was the withdrawal of labour made effective: production continued behind the picket lines in both cases.

## Fairfax: scabs kept presses running

At Fairfax, the bosses used a shop-floor personal quarrel to provoke a strike by sacking a Printing and Kindred Industries Union (PKIU) chapel representative. The PKIU walked out, supported by metal tradesmen in the AMWSU, ironworkers, engineers (ASE), plumbers and some Transport Workers Union (TWU) members. Unionised journalists, electricians, TWU contract drivers (including two shop stewards) and clerks crossed the picket lines and continued to work throughout the strike, however.

Pickets numbered 100 to 150 at times, and militant flying squads managed to stop some of the small flatbed trucks carrying scab copies of the *Sun*, Fairfax' trashy afternoon tabloid. More than once the nearby streets were strewn with papers, but the pickets only managed to stop a small percentage of the trucks. Members of Premier Wran's police were seen helping load papers on the docks, as well as protecting scab truck drivers and arresting several strikers. Little was done to stop scabs from entering the plant, and newsagents all over the city continued to display quantities of Fairfax publications, not one of which missed an issue. In this lay the biggest weakness of the strike.

In addition to the "unions" which worked behind the picket lines, Fairfax was able to make use of its huge permanent scab force, euphemistically referred to as "staff" or "foremen". *All* those behind the picket lines were necessary to keeping the scab production going, whether they were doing their "regular" jobs — twice as fast, no doubt! — or directly replacing struck labour, which is what most "staff" are there for in the first place. *All* who worked were personally thanked by management in a company letter after the strike was over ("we couldn't have done it without you", etc, etc).

One clerk, Linda Menzie, honoured the



Scabs smash into Fairfax picket line (above). Cops cover stop signs at nearby intersection to aid their getaway (below).

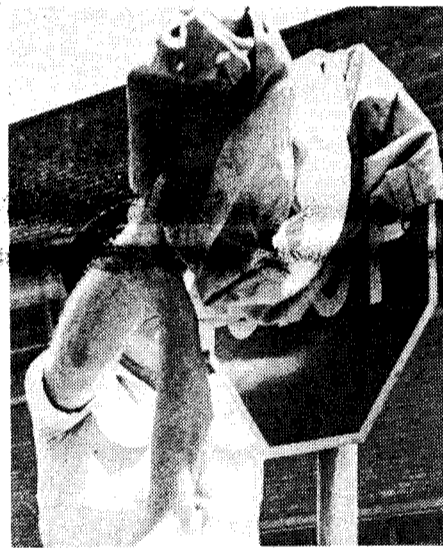
PKIU pickets despite the fact that Federated Clerks Union (FCU) officials told her to work — as they themselves were doing. Menzie was the first clerk in memory to honour a printers' picket line at Fairfax. In an interview with *Spartacist* (see accompanying article), she pointed out that the clerks' work is important to producing a scab paper "even when they're just doing their normal jobs"; and many are recruited to replace struck labour on printing machines as well.

Chief responsibility for the failure to shut down production at Fairfax must rest with the PKIU leadership, which did nothing to mobilise more than a handful of the 1300 or more workers on strike for pickets, or provide a strategy (beyond a vague call for "support") to prevent other unions from crossing the lines. A motion calling for mass picketing to stop all scabs and supplies from entering the struck plant was foreshadowed from the floor at a PKIU mass meeting during the strike by a militant, but the chairman "neglected" to take it up before adjourning the meeting. The strike ended before an Arbitration Commission judge finally ordered the reinstatement of the sacked chapel representative.

## Philip Morris: company gun thugs, company union

The strike at Philip Morris grew out of pay and overtime disputes which led tradesmen to place a ban on maintaining new cigarette machines. The bosses sacked two workers for honouring the ban, and a stop work meeting voted to strike despite a provocative invasion of the meeting by cops. The strikers maintained a militant picket line around the clock in order to stop supply trucks from entering. They fought off a vicious, concerted attack from cops, dogs and the bosses' hired gun thugs, one of whom tried to serve an anti-picketing court injunction on strikers by pointing a gun at them. The pickets were successful at first in stopping supplies, but suffered a setback on 7 December when a massive police operation brutally smashed the picket line to escort a month's supply of tobacco into the plant, and cigarettes out.

Production was reduced, but it continued because 800 mainly women production workers in the "Tobacco Workers Union" worked throughout. This "union" has its office on company property, and its registration fee with the Arbitration Commission was reportedly paid by the company! The leadership of this obviously company union was hostile



to the strike, but members of the Storemen and Packers Union and Federated Engine Drivers & Firemens Association also worked. A ban on Philip Morris products placed by the striking unions remained a largely ineffective consumer protest, but when the AMWSU and Electrical Trades threatened statewide strikes in response to the company court order and thug violence, the company agreed to reinstate the sacked workers. The union, however, was saddled with a three-month "cooling off" period for pay and overtime negotiations.

One of the two sacked workers at Philip Morris, John Karadeas, an



Flying pickets in 1934 Teamsters strike, Minneapolis, US. "Suddenly, without any warning, the cops opened fire on the picket truck ... and they shot to kill. In a matter of seconds two of the pickets lay motionless on the floor of the bullet-riddled truck...." (Farrell Dobbs, Teamster Rebellion)

AMWSU shop steward, told *Spartacist* that the company could not operate more than two weeks without machinery maintenance; yet production was kept up by scabbing staff, many of whom are former tradesmen, and by the production workers. Karadeas played a leading role in building the strong shop floor organisation which enabled the tradesmen to hold out under adverse conditions as long as they did. Yet when asked whether tobacco workers had been called out in solidarity, he articulated the craftist conception common to most strikes in the Australian labour movement:

"I didn't ask for actual support, direct support; all I said was to make sure the company didn't use tobacco workers to do any scabbing inside the factory by assisting the staff people.... We're not asking them to walk off or anything like that."

Although honestly held by many militants such as Karadeas, these views represent not a union "tactic" at bottom, but a justification for scabbing. It is impossible to work at one's "regular" job behind a picket line on which fellow workers are being beaten, smashed into by trucks and arrested, and not be scabbing. Those who do not actually touch struck work themselves are helping company-union finks, professional strikebreakers, "staff" scabs who cannot normally touch union work, and other such human refuse to break the strike, and they are thus scabbing as well.

## Unions were not built by scabbing

Much is made about the history of the Australian labour movement — though it is not unique — to justify scabbing. Although there were many pitched battles in the early union movement, it is true that the picket line was not used here as much as in other countries such as the US and Britain. The development of the arbitration system led early on to state protection of unions which were riddled with craftist divisions which became entrenched. Membership of unions rose (and is still high), but industry unions, organised across craft lines, were held back through the conservatising influence of both the arbitration system and the trade-union bureaucracy, which was mainly concerned to preserve its niche in the system.

In the US, industrial unions were built in a virtual civil war in the 1930s, fought on "three thousand miles" of picket lines; whereas in France, plant occupations became more common for preventing scabbing. But despite different historical traditions, all labour movements are ultimately based on the same power — the workers ability to withdraw their labour — and a scab is a scab in any country, regardless of the methods used. Australia is no exception. "We lost the strike in 1928 because they brought the scabs in", reports a Port Melbourne wharfie, Tom Hills,

"The police fired on the wharfies who were trying to stop scabs going on the wharves, and some of them were injured. One of them, Alan Whittaker, died.... I remember in port one day a funeral went past. A wharfie said, 'Don't take your hat off, Tom. He was a scab.' 'When was he a scab?' I said. 'He was a scab in 1890!' ... There was no excuse for a scab then [1928]. He scabbed and that was it. It didn't matter what reason there was...." (from *Weevils In the Flour*)

The aim of any strike today is the same as



Fairfax workers pulling scab papers off back of truck.

it was in 1928: keep the scabs out to shut down production. There is no other way.

Scabbing in any form is a mortal threat to the labour movement at any time. Craftist divisions render the unions deeply flawed as organs of class struggle, because they always heighten divisions in the class based on skills, wage levels, sex, ethnic or national background, etc, which make it easier for the bosses to recruit scabs. The clerks at Fairfax and production workers at Philip Morris are mainly women, who suffer a double oppression and may be turned against the higher-paid, usually male craft workers unless the labour movement struggles hard to organise them and raise demands aimed at special oppression — paid child care facilities, job training, 30 hours work for 40 hours pay — to make more jobs for all. But in any strike, there also must be strong, mass pickets to prevent *anyone* from crossing: no union has ever been built by crossing picket lines!

As industry evolves through technological change, the heritage of craft div-

isions becomes even more dangerous. Shops such as newspapers that could once be stopped by a simple walkout of tradesmen with no picketing can now be run with modern methods usable by clerks. Partly for this reason, picketing has been on the rise in recent years.

The essential similarity of strikes everywhere is shown by the fact that the "arguments" — actually petty excuses of finks and bosses — for scabbing are always the same. Pickets at the Fairfax strike were annoyed that *Direct Action*, weekly rag of the fake "Trotskyist" Socialist Workers Party, carried a photo-reduction of a scab issue of the *Sun* during the strike. But what they didn't know is that these so-called socialists condone scabbing and are actually running a scab, Andrew Pulley, for president of the US! Pulley and fellow US/SWP member Pat Grogan crossed the picket lines of striking railway workers in the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks (BRAC) in 1978 to enter Chicago-area steel plants where they worked,

despite the fact that BRAC pickets distributed a leaflet urging steel workers to honour their lines. The picket lines were "around railroads" not "around steel" they argued, although the two are of course inseparable inside a steel plant! Grogan also claimed she got "permission" from the pickets to go in.

Thus even in one of the historic centres of the industrial union struggles of the 1930s, militant traditions are undermined with the same arguments as in Australia. But real unionists have not forgotten that picket lines mean don't cross, and even the sellout BRAC leadership was forced to admit that "It's a commonplace union thing to observe picket lines. Not just with this union, but with any union" (see *Workers Vanguard*, 6 October 1978).

It is not true that consciousness of the meaning of picket lines does not exist in Australia. Traitors to the working class like Pulley, Grogan and their cohorts in the Australian SWP think that a single worker refusing to cross a picket line of a type not *explicitly* (at that moment, anyway) aimed at keeping him or her out would be viewed as an inappropriately undisciplined individual act of comically misplaced heroism. But why then was the lone clerk, Linda Menzie, welcomed on the Fairfax picket line? Why did the PKIU pay her strike pay and vow to protect her job afterwards? And why was even *Direct Action* forced to say in a later issue (31 January) that her action was "worthy of mention" as an example for other workers to follow, when its supporters don't follow it themselves?

Black-bans have been a part, frequently quite important, of union struggle in Australia. Mail workers' at Sydney's Redfern Mail Exchange banned scab papers and mail during the 1976 Fairfax strike — an action still remembered today. But such actions, far from the actual battle line at the struck plant, are much more difficult to make effective than *shutting down the struck plant itself*

through mass picketing. In the recent Fairfax and Philip Morris strikes, no black-bans in other shops materialised, despite general knowledge that the strikes were on. Of course no one should handle struck goods, but how can strikers expect other workers to risk their jobs employing black-bans, when the pickets themselves are not trying to stop scabs producing the struck goods from going in in the first place, and haven't called out the other unions in the shop?

The actions or instructions of union officials are often cited as an excuse for crossing picket lines, but these actions are *betrayals*. Clerks Union leaders can always be counted on to cross picket lines of printers at Fairfax, but how are they any better when doing this than the company-union finks at Philip Morris? And it doesn't stop there. When ACTU head Bob Hawke passed through AMWSU and Electrical Trades pickets to enter the Philip Morris-sponsored Marlboro tennis open, and was then photographed inside hobnobbing with Philip Morris bosses, the strikers rightly felt that their struggle had been insulted and violated. Union "leaders" who cross picket lines deserve to be expelled from the labour movement!

The leaders of the ALP and fake "lefts" are generally no better than the worst "trade-union" scabs. The government of Victoria which sent cops to shoot and kill the wharfies in 1928 was the Hogan Labor government; and Neville Wran was no better when he sent his cops to smash the Fairfax picket line, where they acted like the paid company guards that they are. Seen crossing the Fairfax picket daily under their protection was Anne Roberts, a well-known supporter of the views of the Communist Party (CPA) in the women's movement. Neither the CPA nor the SWP in power would be any different than the openly pro-capitalist Wran administration of the bosses' state.

Continued on page 10

## Interview with Fairfax clerk

# "Only scabs cross picket lines"

Following the recent strike at Fairfax newspapers in Sydney, *Australasian Spartacist* obtained this interview with Linda Menzie, a clerk at Fairfax. Menzie courageously refused to cross the picket lines set up by the striking unions even though her own union, the Federated Clerks, criminally remained at work. Instead she joined the picket line with a placard saying, "This clerk doesn't scab".

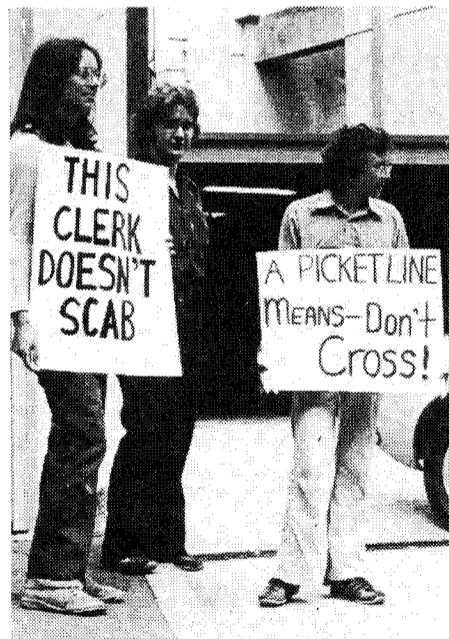
This militant's act was an all-too-rare example of elementary class solidarity. Craftist "traditions" of crossing the picket lines of other unions are a betrayal of the working class. Working behind a picket line in a struck shop is scabbing, and no union was ever built by scabbing!

As the first clerk ever to honour a printers picket at Fairfax, Menzie was well-received by the strikers. They insisted she accept PKIU strike pay, and the printers union has made it clear to the company that any attempted victimisation of Menzie will be treated as an attack on the PKIU itself. The result: the only clerk to return to work without shame has not been victimised.

★ ★ ★

**Question:** It's fairly unusual for clerks to go out in support of striking PKIU members at Fairfax, so why is it that you went out in this case?

**Answer:** Well, I've never gone in during any of the strikes that have happened while I've been working at Fairfax, because I think it's a very important principle to honour another union's picket lines. It's very clear that if you go into the building and work for the company that's being fought against that you're scabbing on the strike. In particular, the work that the clerks do at Fairfax during a strike — even when they're just doing their normal jobs — is very important to putting out



On the Fairfax picket line.

the scab papers. And in addition, a lot of clerks are used to go down and work the printers' machines when there's a strike on.

**Q:** What was the response from the workers down on the picket lines when you joined them instead of going in?

**A:** The workers in the PKIU were generally pleased that I'd come down. I got quite a good response, although I think a lot of them wondered why I would do such a thing because it is very unusual, especially as the clerks union wasn't actually out. But generally I was very well accepted. So much so that a whole number of pickets came up to me and made sure that I got strike pay and promised to defend me should the company try to sack me when we went back to work. It made a very nice point to the clerks who were going in as well.

**Q:** Speaking of them, what was their response to your going out?

**A:** Naturally, I tried to get the other clerks to go out. I stood near the gate where the clerks were going in and told them not to cross the picket lines and to come out in solidarity. There were a couple of women who were sympathetic and I think they felt pretty guilty going in, but in general I heard that on the floor upstairs, people were calling me a "stupid woman".

**Q:** Why did they respond in that way?

**A:** Well, most of the people in my section, the classified ads section, are women and they suffer doubly, both as women and as workers. The result of that is that many of them see their main role in life as in the family and often lack any consciousness of themselves as belonging to the working class.

I have been involved in the women's liberation movement in the past and I have supported the Spartacist League and its politics in the movement. The SL fights for a class line to unite working class women in the struggle against capitalism. But feminism doesn't see that women's oppression is a **class** question, they merely see all women as united in their oppression. And this means that ultimately feminism leads to crossing the class line because it's mainly interested in fighting for women's issues in a cross-class way. In this particular strike you had Anne Roberts who's a prominent feminist and a supporter of the CPA crossing the picket line here. She's a member of the journalist's union. So women's oppression has to be taken up and fought in the workers movement.

**Q:** There were a number of other left organisations down on the picket lines in addition to the SL which, as you know, was actively supporting the strike. What was the response to the other left groups?

**A:** *Direct Action* was the only other left

group that was actually selling its papers down on the picket lines. But the issue they were selling had a scab *Sun* in it as a reduction and they weren't very popular at all. It shows that they have a very soft line on picket lines and the whole question of black goods and scabbing to actually put a copy of a scab paper in their paper.

**Q:** When you eventually did go back to work, after the strike was over, what was the response of the clerks?

**A:** Again it was a mixed response. I had a few people coming up and congratulating me, saying that it was a very good thing to have done. I think a lot of other people were a bit hostile and disgruntled by the fact that I wasn't sacked. But it's also very nice because the PKIU made it very clear that they would have defended me if I had been sacked and I think this is the key reason why I wasn't sacked — the company knew that the union would defend me.

**Q:** Finally, what do you think the answer is to the fact that so many clerks scab when another section is out on strike?

**A:** What is necessary is that you try and shut the whole plant down; that's the only effective way to win a strike. The printers struggled hard — including with the police — to stop the papers from coming out once they were produced. But the most effective way, I think, to have gone about the strike would have been to set up mass pickets at the gates to stop the workers going in. Then they wouldn't have had the problem of papers getting out because they wouldn't have been producing any in the first place. I came out because I believe that picket lines are there to stop **everyone and everything** from going in to a struck plant. And in my opinion that principle, that tradition has to be reestablished as the number one principle of the Australian labour movement: only scabs cross picket lines. ■

# Cowards flinch, t Trotskyis with U



Melbourne rally, 8 February: Spartacist contingent hails Red Army ...

"The Russian question is with us once again, as it has been at every critical turning point of the international labour movement since November 7, 1917." Forty years after American Trotskyist leader James P Cannon spoke these words, the Russian question — defence against imperialist attack of the gains of the Russian October Revolution, the greatest single event in human history — is again polarising the workers movement. Then it was Poland and Finland. Today it is Afghanistan. But the line-up on this question, the single most important issue underlying the principal divisions in the working class, has not changed: on the one side, defending the gains of October, the consistent Bolsheviks, the Trotskyists; on the other, world imperialism and its sundry centrist, social democratic and Stalinist allies and agents within the labour movement.

Against the chorus denouncing so-called "Soviet aggression" against poor little Afghanistan, the international Spartacist tendency has raised the slogan, "Hail Red Army!" With Carter threatening thermo-nuclear war, we have come out unambiguously for the victory of the Soviet army against the reactionary tribal revolt in Afghanistan and for the defence of the USSR. But these positions, which should be axiomatic for self-proclaimed revolutionaries, have been held by us *and us alone*: without exception the rest of the left have shown the white feather and bolted, either straight into the camp of counterrevolution or into a head-in-the-sand denial of the uncomfortable reality around them.

## Maoists: running dogs of Fraser

It is no surprise that ALP leader Bill Hayden — who wants the bosses to put him in charge of Australia's junior imperialist state — should attack Fraser's anti-Soviet measures only because they are "empty gestures" and therefore "ineffective" against the USSR. Nor does it come as much of a shock to see that the loudest "left" drummer boys for Carter's new Cold War, hate Russia frenzy are the Maoists. For those like the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) whose slavish loyalty to Peking led them to about-face overnight to support Bandaranaike's massacre of the 1971 Ceylonese leftist youth uprising, and to support the CIA-backed South African invasion of Angola in 1975, resolutely upholding Afghan reactionaries and hailing Carter's war drive are just another service on behalf of China's counterrevolutionary alliance with US imperialism.

Malcolm Fraser is lauded in the pages of *Vanguard* for being "forthright and unequivocal" in his anti-Soviet rantings. Its 31 January issue makes no bones about their preparedness to block *with anyone* against the Soviet Union — "As wide as possible" means just what it says" — although *Vanguard's* insistence on the point indicates that some faint-hearts in the Maoist ranks may have queasy stomachs about "redefining" the meaning of "rightwing", "Liberal" or "grouper". For to follow Peking to the bitter end in backing the acknowledged class enemies of Australian workers will

reduce the Maoists to a sterile cult existence.

Obscene though the Maoist position is, they are not alone in wanting to see the Red Army in Afghanistan routed. The International Socialists (IS) have also come out unambiguously for the military victory of the CIA-backed Islamic guerrillas. On 18 January they attended an anti-Soviet rally in Melbourne, along with infamous Nazi Ross "the Skull" May, the Maoists, the Christian Mission to the Communist World and "Captive Nations" reactionaries, who include Croatian Ustashi fascists.

## The "third camp" in action

Clearly embarrassed at having its support to this rally exposed, the IS is trying to wriggle off the hook and now pretends it was really only "leafletting" this bunch of fanatical anti-communists (see accompanying article, "IS won't debate Trotskyists"). But in identifying with this demonstration the IS showed more than anything that the real foundation of its policies is *not* rank-and-fileism, petty-bourgeois "worker talk", or "fight the fascists" rhetoric but Stalinophobic anti-Sovietism. "Neither Washington nor Moscow", they bleat, but throughout their sordid history the "internationalists" of the Third Camp have *always* come down on the side of Washington in any conflict between imperialism and the USSR.

Domestically the IS has historically been divided over which opportunist renegade from Marxism it should claim to stand by — Max Shachtman with his "theory" that the Soviet Union is bureaucratic collectivist, or Tony Cliff with his equally abysmal "state capitalist" rationalisation for refusing to defend the USSR. But in either case its origins as a right-wing breakaway from Trotskyism toward mainstream Social Democracy are clear. Shachtman split from the then-Trotskyist American Socialist Workers Party in 1940 over the Soviet invasion of Finland, while Cliff broke with the Trotskyist movement in 1950 when, under the pressure of intensely anti-communist Cold War hysteria, he refused to defend North Korea against US imperialism.

At a panel debate between the Communist Party (CPA), the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Socialist Party (SPA) held on 19 January under the auspices of the CPA's "Marxist Summer School" at Sydney University, an IS speaker spelled it out:

"The Russian army is in Afghanistan in order to suppress the class struggle there.... We give critical support to the Afghan rebels ... because of the effect their victory against the Russian army would [have in giving] an impetus to the working class around the world."

"An impetus to the working class"?! Victory to the Afghan reactionaries could only mean massive repression. The trade unions legalised by the Kabul government would be outlawed; *purdah* (the seclusion of women), the veil and the bride-price would be restored; socialists, liberal democrats, even non-Muslim "infidels" would be slaughtered *en masse*.

The IS cannot admit that the Soviet

Union is actually fighting *on the side of progressive reforms* against all the most reactionary components of Afghan society — and the CIA — because it explodes their whole "theory" of "Russian imperialism". *For where and when has an imperialist army ever before fought on the side of the oppressed?* To be sure, the IS' fellow-thinkers in Britain scandalously *defended* the entry of British troops into Northern Ireland in August 1969 on the grounds that the army was giving the Catholics a much-needed "breathing space" (*Socialist Worker*, 11 September 1969). But the subsequent history of that conflict shows that imperialist armies are instruments of oppression, not liberation.

The Red Army can fight against the former exploiting elite of Afghanistan because, though deformed by bureaucratic misrule, it is still the army of a *workers state*. IS dogma to the contrary, the rulers of the USSR are not a class but a bureaucratic *caste* which stands in an analogous relation to the Soviet economy as reformist bureaucrats do to the trade-union organisations of the working class. But anyone who used the fact that the privileged officials also betray workers struggles to justify strike-breaking could only be labelled a scab.

The IS refuses to defend the basic productive relations of Soviet society which were established by the October Revolution of 1917 and have never been reversed or overturned. Nationalised property, the monopoly of foreign trade and a planned economy are what define the economic character of the USSR as a workers state. Were these property forms overthrown and the USSR converted into an imperialist colony it would be an epochal defeat for the international proletariat, opening up a vast area for renewed capitalist exploitation. Yet that is what the IS wants at bottom.

So egregiously reactionary is their line that the IS lies outright in an effort to drag in Trotsky's revolutionary authority to legitimise it. Referring to Stalin's 1939-40 invasions of Poland and Finland as "the first visibly imperialist act by Moscow", the *Battler* (26 January) con-

cludes with a virtual call for bourgeois-nationalist counterrevolution in the USSR: "the oppressed peoples inside what Trotsky called 'the prison of nations' may rise up".

The leaders of the IS well know that Trotsky's last major political battle, documented in his book *In Defense of Marxism*, was a struggle *against* those who claimed that the Soviet invasion of Finland was an "imperialist act", and that he vehemently *defended* the Soviet Union against attempts — internal or external — to restore capitalism there, *including the defence of the Red Army in Poland and Finland*. Those who advocated Soviet withdrawal from Finland — Burnham and Shachtman — were, he pointed out, a petty-bourgeois opposition which had capitulated to the pressure of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Four decades later this characterisation applies with full force to Shachtman's political heirs.

## CPA: social democrats

Like the IS, the CPA has come out against the Soviet incursion and has raised the call for Soviet troops out. So explicit is the CPA line that the 14 February *Vanguard* even called for including them in the anti-Soviet front of the steadfast Malcolm Fraser.

Speaking at the 19 January panel debate, CPA joint national secretary Eric Aarons decried the Soviet intervention as a violation of "the principles of non-interference", a trampling underfoot of Afghanistan's "national sovereignty" and an expression of Soviet "big power politics". Unlike the CPA, Trotskyists have always upheld the democratic right of all nations to self-determination. But to whom does this apply in Afghanistan — the majority Pushtu-speaking Pathans? Or the Tadzhiks, the most urbanised, with close relatives on the Soviet side of the border? Or the Baluchis, who overlap heavily with Pakistan and Iran? Upholding the "national sovereignty" of a state which is not really a nation is in this case simply a device to justify lining up with imperialist propaganda depicting the USSR as an imperialist aggressor.

After the once-Revolutionary CPA had

## SPARTACIST PUBLIC MEETINGS

### Afghanistan:

# Victory to the Red Army!

## Defend the USSR!

### Smash Carter/Fraser war drive!

#### Sydney:

Friday 22nd February 7.30pm  
Ground floor bar,  
Trade Union Club,  
Foveaux St, Surry Hills.

Thursday 28th February 1pm  
Cullen Room, Holme Bldg,  
Sydney University

#### Melbourne:

Wednesday 12th March 1pm  
Board Room, Union Building,  
LaTrobe University

Friday 14th March 7.30pm  
Plumbers Hall,  
52 Victoria St, Carlton

# traitors sneer... sts stand USSR



... while weak Maolist counter-demo echoes Carter/Fraser anti-communist hysteria

become a Stalinised party, it slavishly followed for decades all the twists and turns of the Kremlin bureaucracy, from its "interference" in the Spanish civil war to betray that struggle right through to the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 to smash the workers councils threatening to destroy the rule of the Stalinist bureaucrats and establish soviet democracy. When the CPA finally broke with Moscow in 1968 over the Czechoslovakia invasion it was not to defend workers democracy but to open the road to the social-democratic big-time as a servant of the Australian bosses directly.

Even in its sellout Stalinist/reformist days, the CPA could display more backbone. In 1949 CPA general secretary Lance Sharkey was sentenced to 18 months jail for stating in an interview:

"if Soviet forces in pursuit of aggressors entered Australia, Australian workers would welcome Soviet forces pursuing aggressors as the workers welcomed them throughout Europe when the Red Army troops liberated the people from the power of the Nazis."

— *The Sharkey Writings*, p 166

The CPA's tirades of today against the "export of revolution" and against the Red Army in Afghanistan put it in the same camp as the 1949 jailers of their former leader.

The pro-Moscow SPA has shown how the Stalinists "defend" the Soviet Union by ludicrously continuing to peddle "peaceful coexistence" and detente. Ever since the October Revolution, there has necessarily been a conflict between world imperialism and this first conquest of proletarian revolution. Clinging to their parasitic privileges, the Stalinist usurpers abandoned Lenin's internationalism and sought to "neutralise" the imperialist powers by suppressing proletarian revolution in the capitalist west. But capitalist imperialism is driven by its internal contradictions to try to reconquer the USSR and the other deformed workers states. By suppressing the class struggle, the Soviet bureaucrats prop up the decaying capitalist system which constitutes the greatest threat to the gains of October. For proletarian political revolution to oust this treacherous bureaucratic caste! The only road to peace is the road of class struggle for international socialist revolution.

## No to "anti-war" popular frontism!

Gathered in and around the furtive and hitherto obscure Trotskyist Study Group (TSG), an assortment of centrists, pacifists and "non-aligned independents" has been trying to build rallies claiming to oppose the Carter/Fraser war drive but in reality seeking to mobilise a movement of classless pacifism. In one such demonstration already held in Melbourne (see report on page 9) and another scheduled for 20 February in Sydney, the organisers have refused to include any demands among the official slogans which take sides in the conflict between the USSR and imperialism. With this contemptible evasion they hope to broker a lowest-common-denominator "coalition" expressly including even those who stand on the other side of the

class line where it counts right now, in Afghanistan.

This strategy is nothing new. TSG leaders such as Paul White in Melbourne hark back to the "broad" Vietnam anti-war movement built by reformists such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), based on liberal pacifism and counterposed to class-struggle sup-

'atheist' regime", you've been duped by "another of Washington's falsifications". Sure — they're really Zionists, right? The SWP must make this absurd denial because if the Afghan mullahs are leading a reactionary movement, then the equally Islamic Khomeinist forces next door in Iran might have to be considered reactionary too. What will the SWP say, after solemnly forecasting an alliance

inventing out of whole cloth a "workers and peasants insurrection" in Kabul in April 1978 as a surrogate target for US wrath. Funny thing though — not even the SWP noticed it at the time, when its *Intercontinental Press* (15 May 1978) described this "insurrection" as a military coup.

## Reforge the Fourth International

Internationally the ostensible Trotskyist movement has presented an appalling spectacle of confusion and capitulation. The SWP's own "Fourth International", the mis-named "United Secretariat", had just suffered a major split in November; now its remaining components are divided again, with no side standing on the principles of Trotskyism. The French LCR had an initial tilt against the US war drive (*Rouge*, 4-10 January). But as soon as the Eurocommunist wing of the French Communist Party voiced its criticisms the LCR chimed in, "we condemn without reservation the Soviet intervention". The issue of *Rouge* after that continued to condemn the Soviet action but opposed the demand for withdrawal. Centristism is indeed crystallised confusion!

Across the channel the IMG's response was firmly counterrevolutionary: *Socialist Challenge* (3 January) headlined, "Soviet Troops Out of Afghanistan!", over a line article by Tariq Ali. Within a fortnight the IMG, too, was backpedalling, now opposing calls for "the immediate withdrawal of troops" — but without repudiating the earlier stand in defence of the Afghan rebels! Chile; Portugal; Angola; China/Vietnam; now Afghanistan: every critical point in the class struggle has found this rotten bloc divided on questions of principle and often concretely on opposite sides of the barricades.

Meanwhile, the opposition bloc of the splitters led by Latin American adventurer Nahuel Moreno and the Stalinophobic reformist Pierre Lambert have distinguished themselves by joining the Carter Cold War without reservation. Moreno's Italian group even openly hopes for the extension of the Afghan counterrevolution into the Soviet Union itself (*Avanzata Proletaria*, 12 January). These feuding revisionist gangs have proven themselves to be neither Trotskyist nor international. Reforge the Fourth International of Cannon and Trotsky!

Iran and Afghanistan have become the acid tests for those who claim the heritage of Lenin and Trotsky. To those who at the crucial moment have fled from their duty to defend the gains of October into the arms of Carter and Fraser, we reply in the words of Cannon, founder of American Trotskyism:

"We always said the moment of danger will find the Fourth Internationalists at their posts defending the conquests of the great revolution without ceasing for a moment our struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy. Now that the hour of danger is at hand ... it would be very strange if the Fourth International should renege on its oft-repeated pledge."

Hail Red Army — Against Islamic reaction in Afghanistan and Iran! No to Carter's war drive! Defend the Soviet Union! ■

## Trotsky on defence of USSR

"The Soviet Republic in 1921 forcefully sovietized Georgia which constituted an open gateway for imperialist assault in the Caucasus. From the standpoint of the principles of national self-determination, a good deal might have been said in objection to such sovietization. From the standpoint of extending the arena of the socialist revolution, military intervention in a peasant country was more than a dubious act. From the standpoint of the self-defense of the workers' state surrounded by enemies, forceful sovietization was justified: the safeguarding of the socialist revolution comes before formal democratic principles.

"World imperialism for a long time utilized the question of violence in Georgia as the rallying cry in mobilizing world public opinion against the Soviets. The Second International took the lead in this campaign. The Entente aimed at the preparation of a possible new military intervention against the Soviets.

"In exactly the same way as in the case of Georgia, the world bourgeoisie utilized the invasion of Finland in mobilizing public opinion against the USSR. The social-democracy in this case too came out as the vanguard of democratic imperialism. The unhappy 'third camp' of the stampeding petty bourgeois brings up the rear."

— *In Defense of Marxism*

port to the military victory of the NLF. Such cross-class "peace" coalitions were actually pioneered by the Stalinists in the 1930s as one form of the "People's Front" strategy of seeking alliances with the "progressive" bourgeoisie. Where such alliances couldn't be immediately consummated, they were no less class-collaborationist. As James Burnham, leader of the then-Trotskyist SWP of the US, explained, in the "broad classless, People's Front of all those opposed to war" the Stalinists

"rule out in advance the Marxist analysis of war as necessarily resulting from the inner conflicts of capitalism and therefore genuinely opposed only by revolutionary class struggle against the capitalist order; and, in contrast, maintain that all persons, from whatever social class or group, whether or not opposed to capitalism, can 'unite' to stop war."

— *The People's Front: The New Betrayal*

It is precisely this illusion the TSG and its allies are helping to sow.

## SWP: what Russian question? What mullahs?

As the most uncritical "Trotskyist" cheerleaders for Khomeini, the SWP committed something of an unnatural political act when it came out for the Red Army intervention against the "Islamic revolution" of the Afghan mullahs. The resulting glaring contradictions have forced the SWP to flatly deny reality. According to the US SWP's *Militant* (18 January), if you think the Afghan tribesmen are "'Muslim rebels' opposed to an

between the Imam and the Kremlin, now that Khomeini has pledged unconditional support for the Afghan rebels? Silence is probably their best refuge.

In its first response to the Soviet troops, the Australian SWP even went so far as to state: "we support the right of the Soviet workers state to take measures necessary to protect itself against imperialist military threats" (*Direct Action*, 17 January). But even this liberal counterfeit of the Trotskyist demand for unconditional military defence was destined to vanish from *Direct Action*; at that same point, their more circumspect American mentors were declaring baldly that "the issue is not Soviet intervention ..." (*Militant*, 18 January). The reformist appetites of the SWP compel them to shun the defence of the Soviet workers state.

For years the SWP hailed as "progressive" every pro-capitalist Soviet dissident to gain the ear of the bourgeois press, and they continue today to pre-occupy themselves with the well-being of the traitor Sakharov, whom the Kremlin sent to Gorky after he denounced the Red Army action. Three years ago the SWP's late revisionist guru Joseph Hansen explicitly repudiated Soviet defencism, declaring that in a nuclear war "'Military defense' has obviously become meaningless...." (*Militant*, 24 June 1977). Now *Direct Action* is back to the usual pacifist nostrums. But even in the flush of its initial misguided enthusiasm, the SWP evaded the global confrontation between the war-mad Carter and the Kremlin by

# IS won't debate Trotskyists

We reprint below our letter challenging the International Socialists (IS) to debate the question of the Red Army's incursion into Afghanistan, and the reply of Alec Kahn for the IS National Executive rejecting the debate proposal.

Kahn professes "amusement" at our challenge that his organisation defend its scandalous support for feudal/tribal reaction in Afghanistan. Such a debate would be, according to him, "purely abstract". But as the attempted murder of our comrade Fred Zierenberg by Muslim/Maoist reactionaries in Frankfurt shows, the question of what side you are on in the class struggle is neither amusing nor abstract. The IS claims to stand for the building of a "revolutionary workers party", yet its position of "critical support" to the Afghan reactionaries necessarily puts it in the same camp as the would-be killers of Trotskyists.

It is plain enough that the IS lacks the political courage to defend publicly being on the same side as Carter, Fraser and the CIA, at least against the Trotskyists of the Spartacist League (SL). But Kahn has to pretend that it's really because the SL has a supposed "conscious strategy of refusing to do any serious working class political work" — unlike, he says, the Communist Party (CPA) the pro-Moscow Socialist Party (SPA) and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). No doubt the IS does prefer to debate with the proven class traitors of the CPA and SPA whom both the SWP and the IS hope one day to out-do and replace.

As for their own "serious work", the closest the IS dilettantes have ever come to hitting the workerist big-time was when they hitched onto the reformist Builders Labourers for Democracy, staunchly defending the "militant" strategy of running to the bosses' courts to get into office. And when one ISer had enough simple class instinct to criticise fellow members for patronising struck pubs, they laughed at him! The SL's principled bolshevik approach to trade-union work over the years forms a sharp contrast.

The Spartacist League, to be sure, does not clown around with ludicrous pretensions to non-existent mass influence like the IS. We recognise that our present struggle is a propagandistic one, and that in the IS, for example, there may be potential revolutionaries who took the IS' workerist hoopla as good coin, and are now confronted for the first time with the concretely reactionary content of the IS' "third camp" politics.

Kahn, for one, doesn't seem too comfortable with the company to be found in the "third camp", and tries to deny that the IS had anything to do with



**Maoists, Nazis, East European anti-communists rally, 18 January. IS also attended, supports same side in Afghanistan.**

the 18 January Melbourne rally where fascists, East European reactionaries and Maoists staged an anti-Soviet rally. In fact, the IS *only* decided to send a big chunk of their Melbourne group to hand out their leaflets to this gang of Nazis, Nazi collaborators and anti-communist maniacs ... far preferable to debating with Trotskyists! Did the leaflet they handed out "indicate support"? You bet; it endorsed the rally's central demand, declaring: "we call for the victory of the Afghan rebels in their war against Russian occupation".

There can be no "neutrals" in the conflict between the USSR and imperialism; when the crunch comes the "third camp" *always* turns out to be the imperialist camp. Today is no different. That is why the IS cannot face up to Trotskyist politics.

1 February 1980  
International Socialists  
Newtown, NSW

Comrades:

We challenge you to a formal debate before the left and working class on the question of the Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan. As revolutionary Trotskyists our position in this confrontation is to side with the Soviet tanks — we hail the presence of the Red Army in Afghanistan in its fight to defend the bourgeois-nationalist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) against the feudal and pre-feudal forces aided by imperialism. We call for the unconditional military defence of the gains of the October Revolution against Carter's mad imperialist war drive!

Your membership should welcome this chance to publicly defend your position on this and other pertinent issues. Your support to the "freedom fighters" in Afghanistan places you in their camps as they skin alive touring Soviet citizens and murder communist teachers who are attempting to improve the position of women, who under the grip of the reactionary rebels, are subjected to treatment not worthy of an animal! Your military defence of the mullahs of Afghanistan means that, if in Afghanistan now, your "comrades" would be fighting side by side to smash land reform for the peasants!

Already in Melbourne the meaning of your "military support" has been made crystal clear. On 18 January your organisation participated in an anti-Soviet, anti-communist demonstration that played host to the Captive Nations Committee, the Maoists, and Australian Nazi Ross May!

Your longstanding refusal to defend the collectivised property forms which were established following the overthrow of capitalism in Russia has always put you in the camp of imperialism. But never more clearly than now. You stand as one with the imperialist Jimmy Carter and

"Iron maiden" Margaret Thatcher as they seek alliances with every form of political animal, from the deformed workers state of China to the butcher Zia of Pakistan.

And Afghanistan is not the only place where your politics are the politics of reaction. In Iran your backing of the mullah-led movement in the spring/summer of 78/79 which placed Khomeini in power was loud and clear, at a time when the international Spartacist tendency was declaring "No support for the reactionary Khomeini! Down with the Shah! For workers revolution in Iran!" This "mass leader" you supported was openly calling for the stoning of "unfaithful" women, the enforcement of the veil, and the crushing of the workers and leftists opposition to a tyrannical regime.

We have pointed out before that while we struggle for political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucratic usurpers in the Kremlin, the unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack is the acid test for revolutionaries in the imperialist epoch. This is the test posed in the present struggle against reactionary mullahs in Afghanistan. As your box on "Russia's Filthy Record of Imperialism" (*Battler*, 26 January 1980) shows, your tendency's rotten record on this question goes back to Max Shachtman whose break with Trotskyism over the Soviet invasion of "poor little democratic Finland" in 1940 ultimately led him into the arms of the American CIA.

Any organisation which claims to be communist must answer for their position on this crucial question. You have much to answer for. We expect your written reply (and if you have any political courage left it will be an affirmative one) early next week. Details of time, place

## Knife attack...

Continued from page 1

Members of the Spartacusbund present in the meeting hall actively assisted in defending the TLD comrades. But as knife-wielding goons sought to silence our comrades for good, supporters of the "state capitalist" Socialist Workers Group (SAG) and the ex-Maoist Kommunistischer Bund (KB) sat by without lifting a finger. These cowards should be ashamed to show their faces in public.

The attackers' murderous methods are the traditional weapons of Turkish right-wingers and fascists, which have also been taken up in battles among the Turkish Stalinists. But this is the first time in recent memory that they have been used against the German left. All working class organisations and individuals who claim to speak on behalf of labour must denounce this vile attempted murder.

and a suitable chair for the proceedings will be decided by mutual agreement.

Yours Fraternally,  
Dawn McEwan  
(for the Spartacist League)

National Executive  
International Socialists  
Flemington VIC  
February 6 1980

Comrades:

We note with some amusement your challenge to "a formal debate before the left and the working class" on the Afghanistan question. Amusement, because ever since its inception in Australia (sorry, Australasia) the SL/ANZ has single-mindedly set about isolating itself from the left and the working class, with its bitter sectarianism, its ferocious denunciations of mass movements of struggle, such as the uranium and women's movements, and most of all, its conscious strategy of refusing to do any serious working class political work.

Instead, it is in favour of purely abstract debate with the rest of the left. We have no desire to encourage you in this misguided strategy, and therefore decline your invitation.

We should also like to point out that we are fully prepared to defend our position on Afghanistan in debate with other sections of the left who, like you, support Russia's imperialist invasion. (In fact we have already done so at the CPA/SPA/SWP forum at the Marxist Summer School in Sydney.)

The difference is that for these groups, like ourselves, such a debate is part of the struggle to build a working class party (in our case, a revolutionary working class party) — while for your own organisation, it is merely a substitute for this task.

One other thing. Your accuse us of "participating in an anti-Soviet, anti-Communist demonstration that played host to the Captive Nations Committee, the Maoists and Australian Nazi Ross May."

In fact, I.S. indicated no support whatsoever for that rally. There were no I.S. placards or banners there. A small number of I.S. members leafletted the rally as it commenced, putting a quite distinct political position (opposing both the Russian invasion and US attempts to exploit it). They left the gathering soon afterwards so that there could be no doubt in anyone's mind that we opposed the chauvinist, pro-West content of the demonstration.

Unfortunately, it seems that there are none so blind as those — like the Spartacist onlookers present that day — whom it suits not to see.

Alec Kahn  
for the International Socialists

Numerous West German bourgeois newspapers covered the attack, including the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Neue Presse*, *Abendpost* and the West Berlin *Tagesspiegel*. The West Berlin *Wahrheit*, organ of the East German Socialist Unity Party, reported that "thugs had attacked counter-demonstrators who came out for the Afghan revolution", referring to "a statement by the Trotskyist League".

## Protest Meeting

The response of the TLD and the international Spartacist tendency was immediate. In addition to bringing attempted murder charges against the would-be assassins, the TLD announced that it would be going ahead with its previously advertised forum on Afghanistan the following Tuesday, despite threatened disruption by the GUAFS. The previous week the Afghan ultra-rightists had jostled TLD salesmen, shouting: "You should get what's happening to the Russians in Afghanistan: dismemberment!"

With careful security preparations the

Sydney University Spartacist  
Club Class Series

## The Soviet Union in the Epoch of War and Revolution

Tuesday 4th March  
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All classes will be held at Sydney  
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While Malcolm Fraser was winding up his tour of European capitals as messenger-boy for US President Jimmy "nuke-em" Carter, 250 people rallied in Melbourne's City Square on 8 February against the anti-Soviet war hysteria being orchestrated internationally by US imperialism. The rally was called by an ad-hoc grouping under the leadership of the "Trotskyist Study Group" (TSG) — a secretive mish-mash of ex-members of several left groups — around opposition to the Carter/Fraser war drive and demands calling for no US bases in Australia, no arms for Pakistan, no trade bans on the USSR and "Defend gains of Afghanistan workers and peasants".

The organisers deliberately omitted demands indicating unambiguously which side of the Afghan conflict they stood on or whether they stood for military defence of the USSR against imperialism. But the disciplined Spartacist League (SL) contingent was clear. Over 30 Spartacist members and supporters marched up to the rally under a banner reading, "Victory to the Red Army in Afghanistan — Down with Carter/NATO War Drive!" chanting, "Afghanistan — Hail Red Army" and "Smash US/China anti-Soviet alliance". The entire Melbourne left was represented at the rally, although the Spartacist League was the only one among the ostensibly revolutionary groups present to reply to the left reformist verbiage of the ALP Socialist Left and TSG individuals from the microphone. The Socialist Left's reformist, social-democratic competitors, the fake-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Communist Party (CPA), which actually calls upon the Red Army to withdraw, attended but remained silent. A few Peking-loyal Maoists, defensive at being in the same camp as Carter, staged a weak counter-demonstration and gave out a leaflet trying to defend their support of the "semi-fascist" of November 1975 (Malcolm Fraser).

Rally chairman Frans Timmerman of the TSG presented the rally as a response to the 18 January anti-Soviet demonstration — where the misnamed "International Socialists" (IS) found themselves leafletting at a demonstration with Nazis, and Maoists made common cause with some real "semi-fascists" in the Captive Nations Council. The featured speaker, ALP state president and Socialist Left notable Kevin Hardiman was, to the crowd's amusement, too "sick" to attend. Michael Barnard's "Comment" column in that morning's *Age* had wondered "whether Mr Hardiman was aware of who some of his bedmates are", falsely identifying the rally's slogans with those of the supposedly "slavishly" pro-invasion SWP. Barnard's question — would Hardiman defy Federal ALP policy and speak to the "no US bases" slogan — must have reminded him of Bob Hawke's recent threats to have Socialist Left leaders expelled, producing a painful case of gutless opportunism.

Fitzroy councillor Kevin Healy of the Socialist Left stood in. He began on a rhetorical "left" note, extending "critical

# Melbourne, Sydney demonstrations Spartacist League hails Red Army

support" to the Soviet intervention and describing the expropriation of private production in the USSR as an "advance" despite the bureaucratic leadership. Furthermore, foreign intervention was in some cases justified, Healy said, giving a hypothetical example of Cuban intervention against a US-backed coup in Jamaica.

But when it came to what he thought the ALP should say, in an election year, Healy produced more standard reformist fare. Afghanistan was "irrelevant", since even Carter/Fraser "don't expect people to believe that Russia is a threat to Australia". He wanted the ALP to oppose the "warmongering", and the "build up" of defence (implying that the existing capitalist war machine should be left at Carter/Fraser's disposal), to "stop supporting that butcher Zia" and get down to the "real issues" of wages and unemployment affecting workers. The threat of the imperialists attacking the world's most powerful workers state and the possibility of a nuclear holocaust is a real issue for the working class if not for parochial social-democrats.

Introducing Spartacist speaker Neil Flormimell, Timmerman laboriously emphasised that the SL "has its own views", meaning of course defence of the USSR, in order to make the TSG's

opportunism quite clear to its "illness"-prone ALP friends. Flormimell pointed out that the bureaucracy often used the Red Army for anti-working class ends, but called for its victory in Afghanistan as the defender of the democratic reforms (land reform, education for women) of the Taraki/Karmal regimes against the reactionary mullahs, tribesmen and their CIA/Peking backers. "The Red Army is not the Red Army of Lenin and Trotsky", he said, "it must be ripped out of the hands of the bureaucracy" through political revolution. The gains of the October Revolution, he added, must be extended to Afghanistan.

Flormimell scored the rally organisers who "don't want to take sides in this conflict" and who avoided mentioning Soviet defencism (which they privately profess) in the publicity. Their placards proclaimed "Olympic games not war games", but such classless pacifist politics, tailored to attract social-democrats and bourgeois liberals, obstructs the working class struggle against imperialist war. The TSG and friends appear to have learned nothing and forgotten nothing since the massive but politically impotent Vietnam moratoria of ten years ago.

The last speaker, chief rally organiser Paul White actually came out for defence

of the USSR against imperialism but "did not agree with the Soviet intervention" which he claimed is not in the interests of workers and peasants in Afghanistan "or workers anywhere". But what "gains" of the Afghan workers and peasants are to be defended, by whom if not the Red Army, and how, were not explained. And military defence of the USSR is meaningless in general without a call for the victory of the Red Army in the concrete situation of Afghanistan where defencism is presently posed.

The rally, like the Afghan crisis itself, revealed much about the left. The SWP was too embarrassed to speak; perhaps because it hinges its support for the Soviet invasion on a myth of a popular "revolution" in Afghanistan. Silent too were CPA members present; their opposition to the invasion, based on the supposed "principle" of "non-intervention", is to the right of the Socialist Left, and is unlikely to sit too well with many of its own members in Victoria.

At this rally, the Spartacist League emerged as the only revolutionary communist opposition to the reformism of the ALP left. The advantages of a consistent Trotskyist position were clear. Things are beginning to be as they should. ■



Trotskyists stand with the USSR: SL marches up to 8 February anti-war rally.

TLD forum, "Hail Red Army! Down with Islamic Reaction!" was held as planned on January 29. More than two dozen militarily organised trade unionists guarded the meeting. Those attending were submitted to a complete body search and checked by a metal detector for firearms and knives. To its credit the Spartacusbund took part in defence of the meeting, as did the Kommunistische Liga. The KB issued a press release condemning the attack on the TLD and calling on the organisations to which the knife-wielders belonged to expel them, but did not join the defence guard. The cowardly evaders of the GIM (German section of Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat), however, repeatedly hung up the phone when called to request their presence in the defence team. Due to rank-and-file pressure ten GIM members finally showed up that night but refused to attend the forum or take part in the joint security preparations.

In the meeting a statement of solidarity was read from Oskar Hippe, who had been a member of the Spartacusbund of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg

and one of the founders of the Trotskyist opposition to the Stalinised Communist Party in the 1920s. Silvia Lenz, chairman of the meeting, thanked those who participated in the common defence and noted that more than 50 militants had turned out despite the Islamic reactionary/Maoist threats.

## Down with Islamic Reaction!

The near-fatal knife attack reveals sharply that there is no middle road in the class struggle. Over Afghanistan the choice is clear: either support to Islamic reaction and its CIA money-men, or a clear position in favour of victory of the Red Army, against the feudalist bands, and for the extension of the social gains of the Russian Revolution to Afghanistan. The TLD has drawn the hatred of the anti-communist fanatics now fleeing Afghanistan — the "people who once had money or position in the country" as West German government officials have described them — and their Mao-Stalinist acolytes because it has long been known for implacably opposing the theocratic mullah regime of Khomeini

and calling for the military defeat of the feudalist tribal rebels in Afghanistan.

The attacks on the TLD are not isolated incidents. On January 5 a Turkish trade unionist, Celalettin Kesim, bled to death in Berlin after receiving knife wounds from Turkish Muslim fanatics. The TLD actively participated in building a January 11 protest demonstration against this murderous atrocity in West Berlin, as it had earlier marched in Frankfurt on December 8 against another knife attack by Turkish fascists against workers who had refused their leaflets. The TLD's record in defending foreign workers, whether victimised by reactionary compatriots or the West German state, is unequalled on the German left.

With its successful Afghanistan forum the TLD made clear that the attempt by a handful of religious fanatics and their Stalinist accomplices to turn the Frankfurt campus into an "Islamic university" will not succeed. Maoist lifer soldiers for US imperialism cannot expect to hide behind claims of "left solidarity" for they are acting as straight-out provocateurs for the class enemy. Like

pro-Khomeini Iranian students who last year attempted to disrupt forums sponsored by the Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth League of the US, their counterparts in Germany will learn that the voice of authentic Trotskyism will not be silenced. ■



Fred Zlerenberg.

# Afghanistan...

Continued from page 1

self-appointed mini-puppet Malcolm Fraser that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is "the biggest threat to world peace since World War II". One of the poorest countries in the world, Afghanistan consists largely of barren mountains occupied by primitive tribal peoples and in itself has no strategic significance to US imperialism. A year ago even the *New York Times* (8 December 1978) was warning America's rulers against an alarmist response to Kabul's ties with Moscow: "Instead of being a strategic highway to India, as the Victorians feared, Afghanistan looks more like a footpath to nowhere". The Kremlin simply did what any rational politician would expect them to do: they went to the aid of their client regime when it got into trouble fighting a civil war with counter-revolutionary feudalists, which was threatening to further destabilise a sensitive border area.

In April 1978 a coup d'état by Soviet-trained officers of the Afghan army and air force overthrow the regime of General Daoud and placed in power the Stalinist-oriented left nationalists of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Based on sections of the officer corps and intelligentsia who wanted to modernise the country (where the average life expectancy is 40 years and illiteracy runs from 90 percent for men to 98 percent among women), the new government of Nur Mohammed Taraki announced a series of reforms: principally a limited redistribution of land away from the traditional landlords, cancellation of the peasants' back-breaking debts to money lenders, the extension of education particularly to women, and the reduction of the "bride price" by which women are bought and sold as chattel.

Within six months the resistance of landlords, tribal chieftains and the country's bloated parasitic caste of 250,000 mullahs (in a population of 18 million!) to these "ungodly" attacks on their privileges had become an armed rebellion. When the Kabul regime became bogged down fighting this CIA-backed insurgency, the army began to disintegrate and significant forces defected to the Islamic reactionaries, taking their Soviet weapons with them. As the situation worsened, Taraki was murdered in a coup and replaced by Hafizullah Amin, who met a similar fate when Babrak Karmal took over following the Soviet military intervention.

The counterrevolutionary bands, sometimes warring among themselves in tribal feuds, invested their rebellion with all the filthy barbarism bred by this backward society. These "freedom fighters" last year slaughtered 30 Russian tourists and 25 Soviet military officers, some skinned alive, others castrated and dismembered. They have singled out for murder Communist school teachers bringing literacy to enslaved Muslim women. These are the anti-Soviet heroes of the bourgeois media, to whom the Chinese bureaucracy is supplying weapons on behalf of its US allies.

Frequently — in Egypt, the Sudan, Sri Lanka, Syria, Iraq and elsewhere — the Russian bureaucracy aids regimes which are in no way more progressive than their neighbours or internal opponents, and which no less frequently turn on their Soviet allies. The Kremlin has often squandered the lives of Red Army soldiers for counterrevolutionary ends: the 1969 Sino-Soviet border war, the current support to the genocidal Derg dictatorship in Ethiopia, the smashing of working-class political revolution in Hungary in 1956 and its stirrings in Czechoslovakia in 1968. But like Soviet support to the heroic Vietnamese and to the Cuban defence of Angola against the CIA/South African invasion of Angola in 1975-76, the Red Army in Afghanistan is clearly aiding the liberation of the oppressed and the defence of the USSR against imperialism. In the struggle against Islamic reaction we side with the Soviet tanks. Hail Red Army!

Despite wishful thinking in the West that Afghanistan will become "the USSR's Vietnam", Soviet forces are clearly capable of suppressing the disorganised, poorly armed tribalist rebels.

What will then become of the country? Lacking all but the most rudimentary proletariat (with only two factories in the country), the essential ingredients for the liberation of the multiple Afghan peoples must come from outside this overwhelmingly tribalist region. If the country is effectively incorporated into the Soviet bloc this can today be only as a *bureaucratically deformed* workers state. Compared to present conditions in Afghanistan, this would represent a giant step forward. The sharp contrast between the condition of women in Soviet Central Asia and that in any Islamic state provides an index. But the road to a socialist future of economic plenty and internationalist equality lies in a proletarian political revolution to oust the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy. This in turn must be linked to socialist revolutions from South Asia to the imperialist centres.

## Why Russia is fed up

The Kremlin has good cause to be fed up: as the US pushes for a nuclear confrontation with the Russians their very existence is threatened. Carter's Cold War could turn hydrogen-hot in a hurry.

Leonid Brezhnev has pointed to the trip wires for nuclear war: China and Western Europe. According to a report released by the British *Daily Mail* of his Moscow meeting with the head of the French National Assembly, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, Brezhnev pounded his desk again and again as he warned: "Believe me, after the destruction of Chinese nuclear sites by our missiles, there won't be much time for the Americans to choose between the defense of their Chinese allies and peaceful coexistence with us" (*New York Times*, 30 January). Old and sick but not crazy, Brezhnev issued a reasonable ultimatum: Russia "would not tolerate" the nuclear arming of China by the US. How can they? Already during the Chinese invasion of Vietnam, it became obvious that Russia might have to knock out the Chinese missiles. It is simply too dangerous for the Russians if US doomsday machinery is placed in the hands of its Chinese ally.

On the other side Western Europe is being armed with new missiles which Brezhnev was led to believe might be aborted under SALT II. With all the deliberateness of a cornered man, Brezhnev explained the problem: "There are now 30 minutes between the American missiles and our own. We cannot accept that this delay be reduced to 6 minutes by new American missiles in Germany." Simple. The timing of assured retaliation is all. To live with even relative security, the Russians need to have time to respond in kind when the US missiles go off — and to know that the US imperialists know they have that time. Military security is measured in minutes, even seconds.

The people of Hanoi were not demoralised by constant bombing, and the Russians will not turn against their bureaucratic leadership because Carter wants to deprive them of more meat in their diet through his "starve 'em for human rights" grain boycott. The contrary is assured. It is aggressive, insulting stupidity which believes that the defenders of Leningrad will knuckle under to Carter's intimidation and threats. Even important sections of bourgeois opinion, both internationally and in the US itself, have become visibly worried about the danger of Carter's "Hate Russia, Fear Russia" siege mentality and his Afghanistan rationale for anti-Soviet military provocations.

On 1 February the *New York Times* prominently published a significant article (reprinted in the *Melbourne Age*, 14 February) by George Kennan, the former US diplomat who formulated the framework for former US president Harry Truman's Cold War doctrine of "containment" in 1948. Kennan worries openly that Carter "reveal[s] a disquieting lack of balance". Afghanistan "is, after all, a border country of the Soviet Union", he writes, adding that the invasion may have had "defensive rather than offensive impulses", and concluding,

"We are now in the danger zone. I can think of no instance in modern history where such a breakdown of political communication and such a triumph of unrestrained military suspicions as now marks Soviet-American relations has not led, in the end, to armed conflict."

The popular anger in the US aroused by the seizure of embassy hostages in Teheran at last allowed Carter to counter the "Vietnam Syndrome" of anti-government suspicion, and to re-direct the jingoist backlash triggered by the Iranian mullahs against the anti-mullah Russian intervention in Afghanistan. But when Truman announced his plan for a global assault on Communism, US imperialism had just come out of World War II as the hegemonic economic and political power. Since then the US has slipped from that position to merely the most powerful of rival imperialists.

For all its arm-twisting, the US thus far has encountered stiff resistance from its European allies. Helmut Schmidt, for example, knows perfectly well that Russia is not about to start a war in Europe. And the economic interests of other imperialist powers are at stake — the Germans, Japanese and French have considerable trade with the Soviet bloc. Of the European powers only Margaret Thatcher, the Iron Maiden of Britain — which trades very little with Russia (and at a deficit) — has gone along enthusiastically with Carter's demand to "get Russia" because of Afghanistan. The attitude is summed up by a West German newspaper headline: "Berlin is more important than Kabul". Who can doubt it?

Malcolm Fraser found this out when he appointed himself roving ambassador for Carter's Cold War. Undoubtedly hoping to capitalise on a Red Scare issue in the upcoming federal election, he has only ended up making a fool of himself, like Menzies, who also tried to posture as a Churchillian world statesman. We can imagine what Giscard d'Estaing and Schmidt must have felt like saying when being lectured by the haughty little prefect from Canberra. He even chickened out of most of the token economic boycotts he had proposed — after the Russians threatened retaliation in kind. The *Age* went after Fraser in a biting 14 February editorial, pointing out that, "Many Australians will take a cynical view of [Fraser's] motives ... the brunt of Australia's moral outrage and stern admonition is to be borne by a small number of Australian athletes."

The widespread sentiment to leave the "Aussie athletes" alone parallels a general reluctance to join Fraser as camp follower of Carter's war chariot. Trotskyists oppose the Olympic boycott not out of some fantasy of "sport free from politics" but because it is a diplomatic attack on the Soviet degenerated workers state, one momentarily important in mobilising popular support for Washington's war drive. Let the Olympic team go to Moscow!

## ALP against the USSR

Most of the Australian people aren't too keen on being dragged into a nuclear holocaust by Australia's imperialist big brother. Yet that is the course to which the Australian ruling class is wedded. Neither the *Age* nor Hayden's Labor Opposition have any thought of doing anything different, either; they are for a more effective imperialist policy. Hayden criticises the Olympic boycott, but welcomes Fraser's increases in the military budget, attacking the Liberals for underfunding the armed forces!

Australian social democracy has always demanded a more "independent" Australia policy, the better to serve the needs of an "independent" Australian capitalism. From time to time this has been expressed in a parochial-reformist pacifism which wants to keep Australia out of entanglements in the conflicts of its imperialist sponsor (expressed today by the Victorian Socialist Left). But in this epoch an "independent" course for small states is a pipedream.

It was the Labor prime minister John Curtin who brought back conscription in World War II under the guise of defending Australia, who ran the imperialist war effort for the bosses when a Tory like Menzies couldn't. And it was Curtin who first established that the US would be Australia's new imperialist patron, because for a capitalist Australia faced with the collapse of the British empire there was no other course. Ultimately, Labor reformism exists for the purpose of turning the workers who follow it into imperialist cannon fodder. And the

Stalinists and left social democrats who search in vain for an "anti-war wing" of the exploiters to unite with will only threaten to derail the workers class struggle which holds out the only hope of preventing nuclear devastation and ending war for all time.

Through detente the conservative bureaucrats in the Kremlin allowed the imperialist ruling class time to attack and erode the "Vietnam Syndrome", the widespread resistance to military adventurism under the banner of the anti-Communist crusade. If America's rulers once again swagger and act as if the future belongs to them, the Stalinists acquiescently believe that capitalism will more and more become circumscribed and finally die more or less peacefully. It is the political role of Stalinism then to help stabilise this decaying capitalist system under "peaceful coexistence". Since the division of the world after World War II it has been a policy of the Russians to respect "spheres of influence", and the Stalinists bought theirs at the price of literally disarming and sabotaging the possibilities of proletarian revolutions in Europe after World War II.

Thus politically, both the Kremlin bureaucrats and those in Washington fear proletarian revolution. For the capitalists revolution would mean the end of their economic and social system of class rule. For the Stalinist bureaucrats it means being swept away in a political revolution. But despite the Stalinists' illusions and fathomless appetites for class collaboration to conciliate imperialism, the capitalists still have a need to reconquer the deformed workers states for capitalism.

When Engels said that ultimately the choices for humanity would be between socialism or barbarism, he did not have in mind the dramatic possibilities of nuclear war. But contemporary history is presented with just such a choice. Only those who are capable of defending positions already conquered will be able to win new ones. Objectively posed by the Carter Doctrine is either workers revolution in the US or the mobilisation of a war against Russia. That revolution, and the political revolutions against the Stalinist bureaucracies, will be led by cadres who have understood that the defence of the historical acquisitions of the proletariat is indispensable to advance toward the world socialist society. ■

# Picket lines...

Continued from page 5

And the equally reformist, workerist International Socialists (IS) think that the tobacco workers in Philip Morris' company union "cannot be blamed if that sort of union refused to lead them out on strike" (*Battler*, 26 January). True, these workers need a real union, not a scab "union", but how can a real union be built by scabbing? The absence of a real union has never made strikebreaking "OK". Unions are built on picket lines, not by working behind them!

All it takes to see a picket line is to have eyes, and you don't have to be a communist to have such a basic union consciousness. Yet the class struggle is not just a "trade union question", since trade unions are incapable by themselves of resolving the conflict in favour of the workers, by putting them in power. Strike pickets, however, are the nuclei of the proletarian army, just as company finks and gun thugs are the nuclei of the fascist army. Strike pickets are the basis for broadening a struggle beyond the trade-union level, as is happening with the steel strike in Britain at this moment. From strike pickets come flying squads, defence squads for stopping the bosses' and fascist attacks, and the beginning of a workers militia.

The Spartacist League, unlike the opportunist fake "lefts", is founded on the struggle to assert and re-assert the principles of the class struggle — the codified lessons of the history of that struggle — as the only way to build a Leninist vanguard party which will lead the working class to victory. Only scabs cross picket lines!

## Britain...

(Continued from page 12)

TUC leaders. All they have tried to do since day one of the strike is sell out the fight. Their phoney answer to redundancies has been to call for protectionist import controls on steel and coking coal. In this way they help line up the workers with — not against — “their” bosses in the inter-imperialist rivalry which eventually means world war.

As for their political counterparts in the Labour Party, James Callaghan and company, they have acted throughout the strike as open strikebreakers, calling for government intervention to stop the strike and for “equal sacrifice” for all workers through new wage controls. And Labour “left” Tony Benn, who has been making many a militant noise since his recent days in the strikebreaking Callaghan cabinet, recently closed ranks once again with his former boss around the call for wage controls.

### Get Thatcher! The workers must rule!

The actions of militants in Yorkshire and elsewhere have ensured that the strike has bitten deep. But this strike needs a leadership that goes much further. While right and “left” bureaucrats alike talk of a “1926” situation they all oppose flatly the idea of calling for a general strike to smash the Tory/employer offensive. For all his talk about supporting the strike prominent “left” Yorkshire miners’ leader Arthur Scargill kept ordering his members to handle steel, and even sanctioned the movement of steel between mines, until four weeks into the strike. And pseudo-revolutionaries like the Communist Party and Socialist Workers Party are so busy tailing “lefts” like Scargill and Benn and so wedded to business-as-usual economism that none has campaigned for the patently obvious and necessary general strike call.

But reformists, no matter how left their rhetoric, are committed to defence of the capitalist system. They will never be ready to lead to victory a struggle which threatens the class rule of the bourgeoisie; they will always be beaten in the decisive moment by their fear of proletarian revolution. They will attempt to head off until the last minute a general strike because a general strike necessarily poses the question of power.

Yet that is precisely the question which must be posed in Britain today. The British bourgeoisie is not fit to run a pig sty. The countless youth who have given up all hope of finding work, the middle classes facing incessant rates rises and price increases — they will either be swept behind a working class committed to a victorious fight against capitalism or they will ultimately be driven into the waiting arms of the fascists.

A fight must be waged for work sharing on full pay to provide jobs for all, for massive across-the-board increases in wages and pensions coupled with a sliding scale of rises pegged to every increase in the cost of living, for an elevation of the living standards of British workers to something at least approximating the level of the advanced industrial society it is meant to be. However, in today’s Britain it is increasingly impossible even to pay heating bills without confronting the need for a fundamental re-organisation of society.

A general strike is necessary in order to carry the steel strikers who have fought so long and hard forward to victory; it is necessary to reverse the outrageous attacks of the Tory government. Even under a non-revolutionary leadership it could achieve such aims. But in the course of such a struggle — which could pave the way to a pre-revolutionary situation — the most militant elements of the working class could be broken from the dead-end of reformism if presented with a revolutionary alternative. Above all, the working class desperately needs a mass revolutionary party, based firmly on the program of Trotskyism, to lead the struggle for a workers government.

Adapted from *Spartacist Britain* no 18, February 1980

## First Redfern, now Newcastle

# Postal workers betrayed

We reprint below an *Australasian Spartacist* supplement of 7 February (slightly excerpted), distributed to postal workers at Redfern Mail Exchange, Sydney. It exposed the betrayal last year of Newcastle Mail Centre workers by the Australian Postal and Telecommunications Union (APTU) leadership, pinning responsibility on both the feuding factions on the NSW executive.

At Redfern elections to positions on the Mail Branch Council and for shop floor delegates are now being held. The confusing welter of candidates and tickets argue only over which discredited wing of the leadership to line up with. From the pro-Hawkins United Postal Action Group to the pro-Kanan tickets the policies of all are no better than those which led to sellout and defeat in the past. The Rank and File Group, several members of which are standing, can’t agree among themselves on the MNP, or what went wrong last July or whether or not to support Hawkins/Battese.

What kind of leadership can such people give the union if they can’t even work out the most minimal program among themselves? None of these candidates offers even a partial version of a class struggle program, and so not one deserves a single postal workers vote.

★ ★ ★

Once again things are coming to a head at Redfern’s Central Mail Exchange. The Australia Post (AP) management has become more and more brazen in its anti-union attacks and plans. Sunday rosters have been halved, traditional seniority rights trodden underfoot, and weekday overtime drastically slashed. Now the AP bosses are threatening to transfer up to 1,000 jobs into sub-standard “interim” mail offices, thereby dealing their heaviest blow to the organised strength of Redfern workers and the union. As part of this assault, AP has made it clear it wants to rearrange shift ratios, slashing take-home pay and speeding up the exit of workers from Redfern.

These attacks must be fought now! The new measures pose sharply the need for an all-out, nationwide strike by the APTU — not just to defend existing rights but to smash the entire Mail Network Plan (MNP) which AP has already been using successfully to sap the strength of the union.

Yet ever since the disastrous defeat of the bans campaign last July, all wings of the APTU leadership have stood flat-footed. The reason given for this is that Redfern workers cannot take on AP by themselves, and there is no unity with other postal workers. But last December, some information “slipped” out which blows this bureaucratic excuse to pieces, and shows that both leadership cliques — Hawkins/Battese and the newly-elected Kanan group — are equally guilty of derailing a united fight by postal workers.

State President Noel Battese let the cat out of the bag himself. At the morning “informational” report-back shift meeting on 17 December, a worker demanded to know why the bypass of mail from Redfern wasn’t being stopped. State Organiser Joe Kanan jumped up to respond that he wanted to stop the bypass as much as anyone, but it couldn’t be done without unity. Battese then said that the State Executive talks about unity, but it gave the Newcastle workers the shaft. Neither Battese nor anyone else explained what had happened either then or afterward, and little wonder. The facts which *Australasian Spartacist* has managed to assemble show that the entire leadership, Battese included, is guilty of stabbing the whole union in the back.

Last September, in the wake of the July sellout, AP brought in 15 casuals to work a non-penalty, induction-type “work-as-directed” shift at the Newcastle Mail Centre (NMC), which has a work force of around 100. As at Redfern, this was aimed at undermining rostered work and

seniority. In response, NMC workers passed a motion calling for assistance from the State Executive. For 6 weeks this went unanswered. The workers placed overtime bans on unrostered overtime, and AP responded by bypassing mail to post offices at Maitland, Mayfield and New Lambton, where it was sorted by posties after their normal rounds. On 3 October, NMC workers passed another motion calling for:

“Our State Executive to urgently support our action by calling on postal workers in NSW (country and metropolitan) to apply the same overtime bans....”

This solidarity call was also ignored by the APTU leadership!

Finally, a 3-man delegation from the State Executive led by assistant secretary Paul Watson went to Newcastle, only to meet a hostile reception from the NMC workers, who passed yet another motion, “that the [previous motion for solidarity bans] receive number-one priority at the next State Executive meeting”....

The minutes of that meeting reportedly show only that Newcastle was discussed, with no motions presented, although a Newcastle delegation was present. According to Watson at the Redfern report-back meeting in December, action was impossible given the state of the union after the just-concluded elections. But in his own written report on the Newcastle delegation’s visit he notes that “NMC members quite rightly, do not regard the recent union elections and the subsequent change in the composition of the State Executive as justification for the 6-week delay in State Executive action”!

Isolated and betrayed, Newcastle went down to defeat because they got the same shaft Redfern workers have been getting all along. “Work-as-directed” induction-type shifts, bypass operations to scab on and defeat a localised struggle, and the resulting loss of wages and conditions, are what all postal workers face with management’s Mail Network Plan. But only *Australasian Spartacist* has pointed out from the beginning that the attack on Redfern was an attack on the entire union which required a national postal strike to protect the union’s conditions, and avoid massive wage and job slashing. In this fashion, we said, “Redfern Can Lead the Way!” (*Australasian Spartacist*, August 1979).

Every clique and faction in or around the union leadership — including the fake “left” supporters of the reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP), Communist Party (CPA) and Socialist Party (SPA) — wanted Redfern workers to fight alone, if they wanted them to fight at all! But how could it have been any different? APTU Federal Secretary George Slater sold out because he sits on the bosses’ Postal Commission, and thus supports the MNP. The only answer for traitors of his ilk is expulsion from the union. The Merv Hawkins/Noel Battese NSW branch leadership wanted the July

struggle to be isolated, and actually bragged that the union was accepting stand-downs to ensure that the mail got through. In October 1979, we said: “All during the fight Hawkins/Battese ... possessed full knowledge of the re-routing of mail around Redfern using scab operations at suburban and interstate post offices” (*Australasian Spartacist*, October 1979). This has now been confirmed by a Newcastle Mail Centre worker who rang the State Executive during the Redfern struggle to ask if NMC workers should stop bypassed mail. The reply was “No”!

Hawkins, Battese, and Kanan (who said he wanted to stop the bypass) were all on the executive at the time and did nothing. And the so-called “lefts” were with them all the way. CPA supporter Brian Carey boasted of helping draw up the sellout agreement which ended the struggle and achieved nothing. SPA supporter Ted Sharkey opposed the strike, supported the sellout and went on to join Joe Kanan’s electoral slate. Lynda Boland, a supporter of the fake-Trotskyist SWP, and also of the sellout in July, blamed the failure to achieve anything on the ranks. “It isn’t possible for Redfern workers to continue taking on Australia Post by themselves”, she wrote (*Direct Action*, 26 July 1979). “They will need the support of the entire union membership.” And why didn’t they get it? Our reply was that Hawkins, Battese and Boland knew only too well:

“Instead of calling on the entire membership to strike in unity, they allowed one centre to be pitted against another.” (*Australasian Spartacist*, August 1979)

Besides being against strike action, Boland and DA never uttered a word of criticism of the course Hawkins, Battese — and for that matter Bob Hawke, who arranged the final sellout — were following.

... Redfern workers must begin now to strike back against AP attacks, providing a lead for the suburban centres in the fight for what all postal workers need: Smash the MNP — no bypassing any mail centre! End induction-type shifts — full union rights for mail workers now! Spread jobs — for 30 hours work at 40 hours pay! End the indexation wage freeze — for major across-the-board wage increases with full, automatic monthly indexing! For a nation-wide postal strike to win these demands led by elected rank-and-file strike committees!

The first step to such a fighting program, however, is to build the leadership which can implement it. Every brand of trade union reformism, even that of the fake “lefts” who tail the bureaucrats, leads to back-stabbing sellouts, capitulation and defeat. Only a revolutionary Trotskyist program is a sound basis for victory against the bosses and their government. It is in the direction pointed out by *Australasian Spartacist* that postal workers must now turn. ■

Australasian

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# Steel strike rocks Thatcher's Britain

Not since the coal miners' strike of 1974 toppled the Conservative government of Edward Heath has there been as crucial a class battle for the British labour movement as that waged since early this year by Britain's steel workers. Ever since the first picket lines went up outside the nationalised British Steel plants on 2 January the strike has shown a militancy and determination which has caught government officials and union bureaucrats alike by surprise. "A general strike cannot be far off", said a worried Sid Weighell, general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen towards the end of January. "It's a 1926 situation."

Originally called on the single issue of pay, the strike has threatened to become an all-out confrontation with the Thatcher government and the capitalist state. On 28 January Wales was shut down by a one-day general strike. A day earlier workers in the private steel sector were called out, after weeks of bureaucratic procrastination and in the face of a court injunction which illegalised this extension of the strike along with all secondary picketing and blacking [black-bans]. Despite a later reversal of this court decision by the House of Lords, the bureaucratic leaders of the steel workers' union, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) made it clear that they were prepared to knuckle under: "The Executive will abide by the law", ISTC President Les Bramley told the press. However, he quickly added, "Whether our members in the public sector will is another matter".

Bramley has had good reason to doubt. There is now virtual "dual power" within the striking unions. On 14 February some 2000 pickets — including miners from neighbouring coalfields — shut down a private scab steel producer in Sheffield, Yorkshire. This mass action was in defiance of a previous decision by ISTC General Secretary Bill Sirs to "exempt" the firm from the strike. The workers' response to this treachery has been to



Angry steel strikers demonstrate in Birmingham, 11 January.

demand Sirs' expulsion from the union. In addition a one-day general strike was called on 18 January throughout the entire South Yorkshire region, both to protest the Tories' public expenditure cuts and in solidarity with the strikers.

For years Britain's steel workers have seen tens of thousands of their jobs sold down the river, while the pay packets of those workers remaining grew steadily slimmer. For years they have been asked to "sacrifice" in order to "save" nationalised bankrupt British Steel.

But steel workers are clearly fed up with futile sacrifices. In the course of this strike they have fought the bosses, the government, the cops and the courts. They have demanded that the strike demands officially include opposition to management plans for mass redundancies and plant closures. Every day platoons of flying pickets — dubbed the "Rotherham Red Army" after the major centre of militancy in Yorkshire — have fanned out to stop steel transport and

private production up and down the country. Flying pickets have now begun to appear outside the British Leyland car components plant at Castle Bromwich in a bid to shut down car production. In conjunction with blacking by transport and other unions they have tied up millions of tons of steel on the docks and elsewhere.

Their militant action has bitten hard. Layoffs have spread throughout the rest of British industry and threaten to spread further as steel stocks are further depleted. But to stop the hated Thatcher government and the ruling class it represents the strike must be spread as well. The steel workers have shown the way, but they must not be left to fight alone against a capitalist class united in its determination to drive every sector of British society to ruin in an attempt to restore the profitability of decrepit British capitalism.

When Bill Sirs told a 2000-strong strikers' rally in Sheffield on 21 January that he was seeking a "decent" compro-

mise with the bosses, militants there responded with a chorus of boos, while some called for a general strike. When 20,000 Welsh workers streamed through the streets of Cardiff on 28 January they demanded "All out!"

And all out — now — is the way to bury the Tories' anti-working class "Employment Bill"; to reverse the wave of plant closures which are sending workers in their thousands onto the dole queues; to restore the social services ravaged by the government's vicious expenditure cuts; to beat back British Leyland's recent provocative lay-off of 40,000 workers; to reinstate Leyland shop steward and Communist Party member Derek Robinson as well as the other trade unionists victimised in the government's drive to emasculate the workers organisations. Already Robinson's union has called a strike at Leyland's Longbridge plant to begin 18 February unless he is reinstated by then. In addition an *indefinite* general strike has been scheduled to begin in Wales on 9 March.

But instead of making preparations for generalising these actions into a country-wide general strike, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) leaders are feverishly trying to stop them from ever taking place. As opposed to these sellout manoeuvres, the TUC must call a general strike *now!* National and regional strike committees must be elected by the rank and file to make sure the strike stops at nothing short of victory; mass pickets and trade union defence guards must be organised to stop all attempts at scabbing. *Shut down Thatcher's Britain!* At a "Reinstate Robinson Conference" held in Birmingham on 13 January, Spartacist League supporter Chris Taylor addressed the 1000-strong meeting with this call for a general strike. The enthusiastic response his speech received shows clearly that many militants are looking for a fighting alternative to the all-talk-no-action course of the trade union tops. Now is the time to act!

The Tories have taken on the steel workers because they thought they would be an easy target. The major union, the ISTC, has one of the most encrusted and conservative bureaucracies in the entire labour movement. It had virtually no tradition of militancy or internal democracy. The Tories thought that a work-force demoralised by years of defeats and bureaucratic betrayal would be a push-over. But the fighting spirit and organisation of the strikers — truly amazing for a group of workers with so little recent history of struggle — have proved them dead wrong.

But this is no thanks to Bill Sirs and the

Continued on page 11

## "Compo" cutbacks — down with Hamer! For a statewide general strike!

Massive working-class outrage confronts Liberal premier Hamer's new amendments to Victoria's Workers Compensation Act. Rammed through last November, they provoked immediate waterfront, building and transport strikes. Angry power workers overturned their executive's 24-hour strike proposal on 2 February and struck for 48 hours after hearing that the widow of a workmate who was killed going home from work would get over \$30,000 less under the new Act. A week later public transport and the wharves were strike-bound for 24 hours. Metal and power workers plan more strikes when State Parliament opens on 11 March, and others may follow.

Pruning the costs of bosses and profit-bloated insurance companies by drastically redefining liability, the new Act requires proof that employment contributed "substantially" to death, illness or injury for claim approval. It also eliminates entirely the right of the family of a dead worker to pursue a civil damages suit in addition to a compensation claim — a right which only applied when the boss' negligence was proven in court.

But Hamer's callous drive against supposed compensation "abuses" is proving widely unpopular, even in the bourgeois press. The *Age* (7 February), accused him of being "insensitive to the point of provocation" and the *Melbourne Herald*

(6 February) warned that this was no "Newport".

Quite true. From right-wing Trades Hall Council Secretary Ken Stone to "left" John Halfpenny, the bureaucrats who allowed hundreds of scabs to break the Newport power station ban and let unemployment and inflation rip, have cynically decided that "compo" is too popular to ignore. Even ALP leader Frank Wilkes proved he still existed by challenging Hamer ... to another election.

Bluster aside, the union tops' "responsible" strategy of piecemeal, one-day strikes confirms their real aim — to secure a "reasonable" deal with Hamer on the basis of the old Act, which did not

provide compensation at full wage parity. Even their Communist Party and SWP camp followers, neither of which call clearly for an *indefinite* state-wide general strike, accept this totally inadequate basis of the struggle.

A statewide general strike should have been called when the legislation was introduced. Call it now! Smash Hamer's Compensation Act! For workers compensation at full wage parity covering all illnesses and injuries! No limit on the right of civil claims! Even on such basic issues, the labor tops and reformists are incapable of providing a genuine class-struggle program of action, showing once again the need for a revolutionary vanguard party of the working class. ■

## Britain...

(Continued from page 12)

TUC leaders. All they have tried to do since day one of the strike is sell out the fight. Their phoney answer to redundancies has been to call for protectionist import controls on steel and coking coal. In this way they help line up the workers with — not against — “their” bosses in the inter-imperialist rivalry which eventually means world war.

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Every clique and faction in or around the union leadership — including the fake “left” supporters of the reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP), Communist Party (CPA) and Socialist Party (SPA) — wanted Redfern workers to fight alone, if they wanted them to fight at all! But how could it have been any different? APTU Federal Secretary George Slater sold out because he sits on the bosses’ Postal Commission, and thus supports the MNP. The only answer for traitors of his ilk is expulsion from the union. The Merv Hawkins/Noel Battese NSW branch leadership wanted the July

struggle to be isolated, and actually bragged that the union was accepting stand-downs to ensure that the mail got through. In October 1979, we said: “All during the fight Hawkins/Battese ... possessed full knowledge of the re-routing of mail around Redfern using scab operations at suburban and interstate post offices” (*Australasian Spartacist*, October 1979). This has now been confirmed by a Newcastle Mail Centre worker who rang the State Executive during the Redfern struggle to ask if NMC workers should stop bypassed mail. The reply was “No”!

Hawkins, Battese, and Kanan (who said he wanted to stop the bypass) were all on the executive at the time and did nothing. And the so-called “lefts” were with them all the way. CPA supporter Brian Carey boasted of helping draw up the sellout agreement which ended the struggle and achieved nothing. SPA supporter Ted Sharkey opposed the strike, supported the sellout and went on to join Joe Kanan’s electoral slate. Lynda Boland, a supporter of the fake-Trotskyist SWP, and also of the sellout in July, blamed the failure to achieve anything on the ranks. “It isn’t possible for Redfern workers to continue taking on Australia Post by themselves”, she wrote (*Direct Action*, 26 July 1979). “They will need the support of the entire union membership.” And why didn’t they get it? Our reply was that Hawkins, Battese and Boland knew only too well:

“Instead of calling on the entire membership to strike in unity, they allowed one centre to be pitted against another.” (*Australasian Spartacist*, August 1979)

Besides being against strike action, Boland and DA never uttered a word of criticism of the course Hawkins, Battese — and for that matter Bob Hawke, who arranged the final sellout — were following.

... Redfern workers must begin now to strike back against AP attacks, providing a lead for the suburban centres in the fight for what all postal workers need: Smash the MNP — no bypassing any mail centre! End induction-type shifts — full union rights for mail workers now! Spread jobs — for 30 hours work at 40 hours pay! End the indexation wage freeze — for major across-the-board wage increases with full, automatic monthly indexing! For a nation-wide postal strike to win these demands led by elected rank-and-file strike committees!

The first step to such a fighting program, however, is to build the leadership which can implement it. Every brand of trade union reformism, even that of the fake “lefts” who tail the bureaucrats, leads to back-stabbing sellouts, capitulation and defeat. Only a revolutionary Trotskyist program is a sound basis for victory against the bosses and their government. It is in the direction pointed out by *Australasian Spartacist* that postal workers must now turn. ■

Australasian

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# Steel strike rocks Thatcher's Britain

Not since the coal miners' strike of 1974 toppled the Conservative government of Edward Heath has there been as crucial a class battle for the British labour movement as that waged since early this year by Britain's steel workers. Ever since the first picket lines went up outside the nationalised British Steel plants on 2 January the strike has shown a militancy and determination which has caught government officials and union bureaucrats alike by surprise. "A general strike cannot be far off", said a worried Sid Weighell, general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen towards the end of January. "It's a 1926 situation."

Originally called on the single issue of pay, the strike has threatened to become an all-out confrontation with the Thatcher government and the capitalist state. On 28 January Wales was shut down by a one-day general strike. A day earlier workers in the private steel sector were called out, after weeks of bureaucratic procrastination and in the face of a court injunction which illegalised this extension of the strike along with all secondary picketing and blacking [black-bans]. Despite a later reversal of this court decision by the House of Lords, the bureaucratic leaders of the steel workers' union, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) made it clear that they were prepared to knuckle under: "The Executive will abide by the law", ISTC President Les Bramley told the press. However, he quickly added, "Whether our members in the public sector will is another matter".

Bramley has had good reason to doubt. There is now virtual "dual power" within the striking unions. On 14 February some 2000 pickets — including miners from neighbouring coalfields — shut down a private scab steel producer in Sheffield, Yorkshire. This mass action was in defiance of a previous decision by ISTC General Secretary Bill Sirs to "exempt" the firm from the strike. The workers' response to this treachery has been to



Angry steel strikers demonstrate in Birmingham, 11 January.

demand Sirs' expulsion from the union. In addition a one-day general strike was called on 18 January throughout the entire South Yorkshire region, both to protest the Tories' public expenditure cuts and in solidarity with the strikers.

For years Britain's steel workers have seen tens of thousands of their jobs sold down the river, while the pay packets of those workers remaining grew steadily slimmer. For years they have been asked to "sacrifice" in order to "save" nationalised bankrupt British Steel.

But steel workers are clearly fed up with futile sacrifices. In the course of this strike they have fought the bosses, the government, the cops and the courts. They have demanded that the strike demands officially include opposition to management plans for mass redundancies and plant closures. Every day platoons of flying pickets — dubbed the "Rotherham Red Army" after the major centre of militancy in Yorkshire — have fanned out to stop steel transport and

private production up and down the country. Flying pickets have now begun to appear outside the British Leyland car components plant at Castle Bromwich in a bid to shut down car production. In conjunction with blacking by transport and other unions they have tied up millions of tons of steel on the docks and elsewhere.

Their militant action has bitten hard. Layoffs have spread throughout the rest of British industry and threaten to spread further as steel stocks are further depleted. But to stop the hated Thatcher government and the ruling class it represents the strike must be spread as well. The steel workers have shown the way, but they must not be left to fight alone against a capitalist class united in its determination to drive every sector of British society to ruin in an attempt to restore the profitability of decrepit British capitalism.

When Bill Sirs told a 2000-strong strikers' rally in Sheffield on 21 January that he was seeking a "decent" compro-

mise with the bosses, militants there responded with a chorus of boos, while some called for a general strike. When 20,000 Welsh workers streamed through the streets of Cardiff on 28 January they demanded "All out!"

And all out — now — is the way to bury the Tories' anti-working class "Employment Bill"; to reverse the wave of plant closures which are sending workers in their thousands onto the dole queues; to restore the social services ravaged by the government's vicious expenditure cuts; to beat back British Leyland's recent provocative lay-off of 40,000 workers; to reinstate Leyland shop steward and Communist Party member Derek Robinson as well as the other trade unionists victimised in the government's drive to emasculate the workers organisations. Already Robinson's union has called a strike at Leyland's Longbridge plant to begin 18 February unless he is reinstated by then. In addition an *indefinite* general strike has been scheduled to begin in Wales on 9 March.

But instead of making preparations for generalising these actions into a country-wide general strike, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) leaders are feverishly trying to stop them from ever taking place. As opposed to these sellout manoeuvres, the TUC must call a general strike *now!* National and regional strike committees must be elected by the rank and file to make sure the strike stops at nothing short of victory; mass pickets and trade union defence guards must be organised to stop all attempts at scabbing. *Shut down Thatcher's Britain!* At a "Reinstate Robinson Conference" held in Birmingham on 13 January, Spartacist League supporter Chris Taylor addressed the 1000-strong meeting with this call for a general strike. The enthusiastic response his speech received shows clearly that many militants are looking for a fighting alternative to the all-talk-no-action course of the trade union tops. Now is the time to act!

The Tories have taken on the steel workers because they thought they would be an easy target. The major union, the ISTC, has one of the most encrusted and conservative bureaucracies in the entire labour movement. It had virtually no tradition of militancy or internal democracy. The Tories thought that a work-force demoralised by years of defeats and bureaucratic betrayal would be a push-over. But the fighting spirit and organisation of the strikers — truly amazing for a group of workers with so little recent history of struggle — have proved them dead wrong.

But this is no thanks to Bill Sirs and the

Continued on page 11

## "Compo" cutbacks — down with Hamer! For a statewide general strike!

Massive working-class outrage confronts Liberal premier Hamer's new amendments to Victoria's Workers Compensation Act. Rammed through last November, they provoked immediate waterfront, building and transport strikes. Angry power workers overturned their executive's 24-hour strike proposal on 2 February and struck for 48 hours after hearing that the widow of a workmate who was killed going home from work would get over \$30,000 less under the new Act. A week later public transport and the wharves were strike-bound for 24 hours. Metal and power workers plan more strikes when State Parliament opens on 11 March, and others may follow.

Pruning the costs of bosses and profit-bloated insurance companies by drastically redefining liability, the new Act requires proof that employment contributed "substantially" to death, illness or injury for claim approval. It also eliminates entirely the right of the family of a dead worker to pursue a civil damages suit in addition to a compensation claim — a right which only applied when the boss' negligence was proven in court.

But Hamer's callous drive against supposed compensation "abuses" is proving widely unpopular, even in the bourgeois press. The *Age* (7 February), accused him of being "insensitive to the point of provocation" and the Melbourne *Herald*

(6 February) warned that this was no "Newport".

Quite true. From right-wing Trades Hall Council Secretary Ken Stone to "left" John Halfpenny, the bureaucrats who allowed hundreds of scabs to break the Newport power station ban and let unemployment and inflation rip, have cynically decided that "compo" is too popular to ignore. Even ALP leader Frank Wilkes proved he still existed by challenging Hamer ... to another election.

Bluster aside, the union tops' "responsible" strategy of piecemeal, one-day strikes confirms their real aim — to secure a "reasonable" deal with Hamer on the basis of the old Act, which did not

provide compensation at full wage parity. Even their Communist Party and SWP camp followers, neither of which call clearly for an *indefinite* state-wide general strike, accept this totally inadequate basis of the struggle.

A statewide general strike should have been called when the legislation was introduced. Call it now! Smash Hamer's Compensation Act! For workers compensation at full wage parity covering all illnesses and injuries! No limit on the right of civil claims! Even on such basic issues, the labor tops and reformists are incapable of providing a genuine class-struggle program of action, showing once again the need for a revolutionary vanguard party of the working class. ■