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Workers' struggles explode in Iran

The regime of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, the bloody-handed tyrant of the Iranian Peacock Throne, may well be nearing its downfall. Throughout the year the streets of Iran have been aflame with rising popular protest which even the most ferocious repression has failed to dampen. After the 8 September "Bloody Friday" massacre of more than a thousand protesters by the shah's elite troops in Jaleh Square, Teheran, the regime doubtless hoped for a respite. But there has been no let-up -- one provincial city after another echoes to the cry of "margh bar shah" ("death to the shah"); the universities and high schools of Teheran and other centres are in permanent ferment.

As the upheavals and demonstrations have intensified -- culminating in the massive day-long march of 200,000 through Teheran on 2 November -- the acknowledged leader of the Muslim Shi'ite religious opposition, the mullah ("holy man") Ayatollah Khomeini, has from his Parisian exile been threatening to give "permission for an armed popular struggle". The "progressive" bourgeoisie of the Iranian National Front -- the political successors of the prime minister, Mossadeq, overthrown by a CIA-engineered coup in 1953 -- have already placed themselves under the leadership of the "eminent chief" Khomeini.

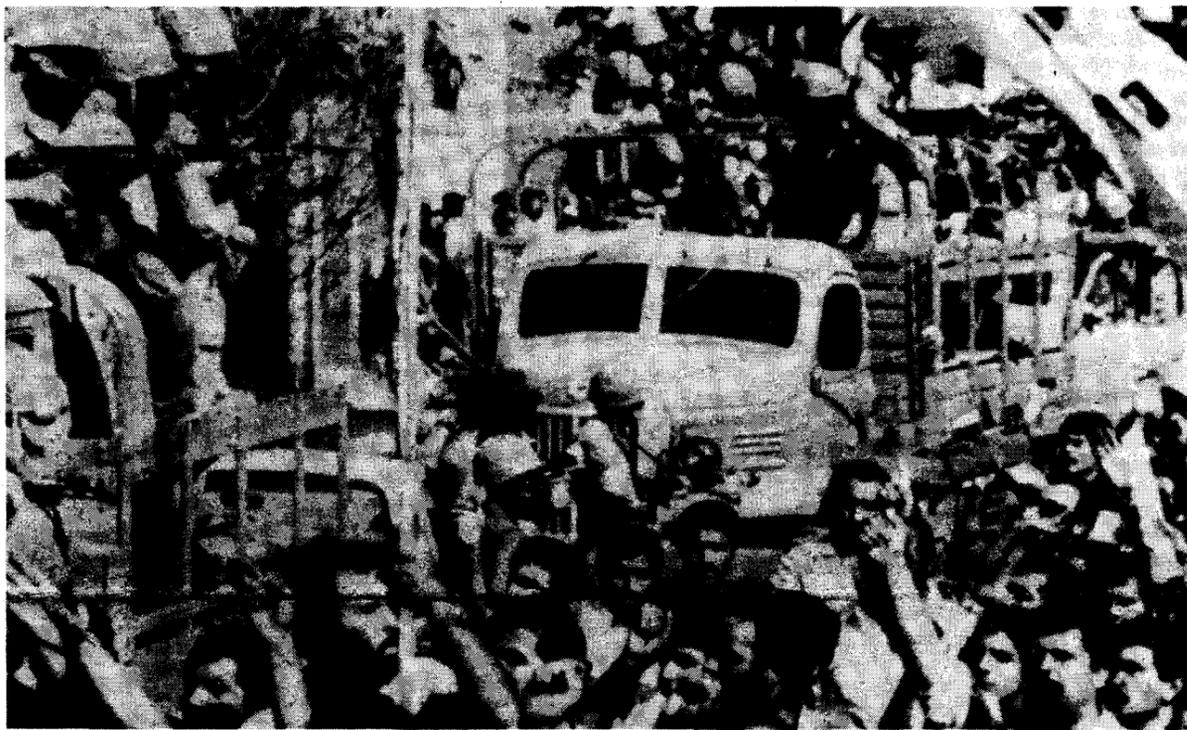
Proletariat enters the anti-shah fight

In this white-hot situation it has been the entry into the arena of a crucial new element which now poses an immense threat to the continued rule of the hated self-proclaimed "Light of the Aryans". The working class has not played a visible, independent rôle in Iran in recent years. But since the beginning of October the three-million-strong Iranian proletariat has become involved in a massive and intensifying strike wave. Initiated by white-collar workers in government utilities and at first focusing solely on economic issues, the strike wave soon spread to the industrial proletariat, becoming what is now virtually a general strike. Many government utilities, the entire transport system and almost all industry including the crucial industrial complex outside Teheran are shut down.

As the strikes have spread they have become overtly political. The climax came in the first days of November when, after a series of smaller wildcats, the 60,000 Iranian oil workers went on strike demanding among other things the ending of martial law and the freeing of all political prisoners. The rich oil and natural gas fields of southern Iran and the great refinery centres of Kharg Island and Abadan on the Gulf are idle, deserted except for their military guard.

The significance of this explosion of proletarian struggle cannot be overemphasised. By vigorously entering the anti-shah fight the proletariat now stands forth as a pole of attraction for the oppressed masses in competition with and, inevitably, in opposition to the reactionary mullahs, whose demagogic attacks on "westernisation" have up to now predominated in the convulsive social turmoil. The mullahs have utilised the oppression of the shah's tyranny to build a movement which seeks to return Iran to the medieval religious fervour of the 7th century AD. The mullahs have not only graphically demonstrated their commitment to Islam's brutal subjugation of women by parading contingents of women swathed in the veil, but have made no secret about their intention to suppress the Iranian left. The slaughter of the Indonesian Communists by Muslim fanatics in 1965 provides an object lesson in the reactionary implications of a victory by Khomeini's followers. If such a disastrous scenario is not to be repeated what is now urgently required is a revolutionary Trotskyist leadership to mobilise the proletariat in an all-sided political assault against the

Continued on page six



Anti-shah demonstrators attempting to fraternise with soldiers in Teheran, September.

For a general strike in Queensland! Smash ban on marches

The labour movement in Queensland is under rising attack from the arrogant, vicious, anti-labour government of bible-bashing peanut farmer Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Two months ago he announced plans for new laws banning strikes in a broad range of "essential areas" and attacking compulsory unionism. In mid-October he personally organised a violent cop assault on a meatworkers' union picket line (in support of a ban on live-cattle export) on the Brisbane wharves in which 45 picketers were arrested and one hospitalised. And on 30 October, a Trades and Labor Council (TLC)-sponsored demonstration against Petersen's year-long ban on political street marches was broken up by cops, who arrested 280 marchers (bringing the total since the ban began to almost 1500) including ALP Senator George Georges and federal shadow minister Tom Uren.

Neither the TLC nor the ALP lifted a finger against the anti-union laws. They did nothing to defend the jailed pickets. For a year the TLC refused to act against the ban on marches, standing mute through one mass arrest of protesters after another. The 30 October march gained the ALP Queensland Central Executive (QCE)'s token official endorsement only after it almost backed out the previous week. As significant as it was, the TLC's official backing was also purely formal; no strike was called, there was no mass mobilisation of unionists. The furthest thing from the minds of the reformist bureaucrats at the head of the labour movement was the only effective means to fight Petersen's attacks: mass, militant labour action.

The march itself, reflecting the servile timidity and abject defeatism of its ALP organisers -- the "left wing" Georges and Uren -- was a set-piece protest, strictly according to the script of "civil disobedience" pacifism. A re-

porter for the Brisbane *Telegraph* (31 October) caught the flavour: "the early arrests had a quaint air of old world courtesy about them... It was almost like selecting partners for a waltz". After the gentlemanly arrests of Georges, Uren and their immediate followers, however, violence broke out. The same reporter described how one cop sadistically twisted his victim's arm "right up behind his neck" as if to break it. The arrests of "marked" protesters standing in King George Square were framed by pushing them from behind down steps into another line of cops, to be charged with "marching" and "assaulting police". The cops were manifestly lacking Uren's "spirit of love for the law", in reality the slave mentality of meek submission to the capitalist authorities.

For a statewide general strike!

Brisbane waterside workers, seamen, and painters and dockers gave a different example the next day when they called a 24-hour strike and staged a 300-strong courthouse demonstration in protest against the arrests. This militant response must be extended into a *statewide general strike* to defend the elementary rights of the labour movement, with the demands: *Drop all charges against the 280 marchers and the 45 pickets! Smash the ban on marches! Defend all union picket lines -- stop government strike-breaking! Down with all the anti-union laws!*

Even the bourgeois press is against the ban on marches; and not only here has Petersen grown increasingly isolated. In recent months he has come under growing fire from within his own Liberal/National Party coalition. The capitalist class is unsettled by these provocative reactionary whims of the troglodyte premier, who clings to power only thanks to a massive electoral

Continued on page two

gerrymander. With only a quarter of the popular vote his National Party commands the lion's share of seats in the state Assembly. His high-handed arrogance toward his Liberal coalition partner, which should be the dominant bourgeois party, led to the recent replacement of the former Liberal leader Knox because he was "too soft" on the premier. Faced with a backbench revolt in his own party over a pet bill, treating even his own cabinet with contempt, Petersen has been openly labelled a "tyrant" in the bourgeois press.

The TLC's refusal to act against the ban on marches has helped pave the way for strikebreaking like Petersen's vindictive attack on the 17 October meatworkers picket and the threat of the same for an eight-week-long strike by brewery workers. The ban on live cattle export represents an impotent attempt to defend meatworkers' jobs through a reactionary, protectionist boycott which their reformist officials substitute for a struggle for a shorter work week with no loss in pay to provide jobs for all. Thus they needlessly promote clashes with small recession-hit farmers whom Petersen is well-practised at mobilising with anti-union demagoguery: he has appealed to graziers to carry and load the cattle if truck drivers and wharfies refuse.

For a mass defence of picket lines!

But the real issue at stake is the defence of union picket lines against the capitalist state. Here too the labour bureaucracy is a conscious obstacle to the defence of workers' interests. Petersen was able to win on 17 October only due to the criminal scab role of the bureaucrats in the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) and the Transport Workers Union (TWU). Wharfies struck for four hours when the cops broke the picket line, but they loaded the ship! WWF and TWU officials have so far refused to declare the cattle black. Gross violation of elementary working-class solidarity has also plagued the brewery strike; one union, the FEDFA, is still working in the breweries! Another ship, the Helena Clausen, is due to load the banned cattle in the first week of November; meatworkers officials have promised an even stronger picket line. Not only must the TWU and WWF respect the ban -- the entire Brisbane trade-union movement must mobilise a mass defence of the picket lines!

A general strike to defend picket lines and smash anti-labour laws, including the ban on marches, could precipitate a terminal crisis in Petersen's dissident-ridden regime, posing the possibility of forcing new elections to oust the coalition and put the ALP in power. But the Queensland ALP -- vitiated by reformist timidity and under the sclerotic control of an ossified clique of right-wing union bureaucrats -- fears any such mobilisation. Instead, when the Liberals sacked Knox, ALP leader Tom Burns offered the big-business Liberals a political alliance against Petersen! The Reform Group in the state ALP backed by Georges, with an "alternative" centred on trivial organisational proposals, shares with the QCE a reformist program able only to lead the workers to defeat. Both brands of misleaders must be ousted and replaced with a leadership of the labour movement committed to a revolutionary program for workers power.

Defend meatworkers picket lines! Victory to the brewery strike! Drop the charges against the arrested marchers and picketers! For a Queensland general strike to smash the ban on marches!

editorial notes

Eurocommunists "rehabilitate" Bukharin

Nikolai Bukharin, one of the leaders of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, was executed by Stalin 40 years ago in the great purge trials of the 1930s. The demand for his "rehabilitation" has now become something of a crusade in Eurocommunist circles, following an appeal from Bukharin's son, Larin, to Enrico Berlinguer, head of the Italian Communist Party (PCI). But what brings the Eurocommunist vultures circling around Bukharin's grave is not the desire for proletarian justice.

The defenceless Bukharin, once leader of the 1918-20 Left Communist faction of the Bolshevik Party, is put to use in a dual-purpose advertisement for that "peaceful", "democratic road to socialism"; he is made to serve at the same time as a traditional Bolshevik authority for the PCI's "Historic Compromise" with the Vatican and as a token of "independence" from Moscow. As well he is the subject for a myth of right-wing anti-Stalinism in competition with the immense moral and political authority of Trotsky.

Under the appropriate heading "Frank Hardy finds a hero" (*Australian*, 7 October), both Bukharin and history suffer badly from long-time Communist Party of Australia member Hardy's own personal contribution to Bukharin's Eurocommunist canonisation. Although not perhaps the most sophisticated (sample: "At first no one knew what to do or say ... except, it seems, Nikolai Bukharin"), Hardy's arguments are typical. Space does not permit the correction of all his gross factual distortions. But what arouses special indignation is Hardy's portrayal of Bukharin as a common, vulgar, reformist liberal ... much like Hardy himself:

"He promoted what in this era would be called socialism with a human face, as in Dubcek's Czechoslovakia in 1968; he favored ... the gradual building of socialism by a coalition of democratic parties, much as now advocated by the Italians.... He favored the checks and balances of a democratic superstructure and the tenets of law, as a study of his ABC [of Communism] will reveal."

A quote from the ABC, a standard Bolshevik text written with Preobrazhensky in 1919 during Bukharin's leftist period, reveals something rather different than the PCI's "Historic Compromise":

"The function of the revolutionary tribunals is to deal speedily and mercilessly with the enemies of the proletarian revolution. Such courts are among the weapons for the crushing of the exploiters ... as are the Red Army and the Cheka."

It was the post-1923 Bukharin, whose clearly

right-wing policies were captured by his slogan of "socialism at a snail's pace", which provides the basis for attempts to claim him as a post-humous theoretician of Eurocommunism. Flip-flopping in empirical reaction to the failure of the 1923 German revolution, Bukharin became the theoretician of the emerging counterrevolutionary bureaucracy. He joined the mounting witchhunt against Trotsky and the Left Opposition, only later to be crushed himself by Stalin, the real leader of the bureaucracy. And finally, under intense moral and physical pressure, he submitted to the farcical "trials" and extorted "confessions" without an audible murmur.

"Who did protest?", writes Leopold Trepper, head of the "Red Orchestra", the brilliant Soviet intelligence network in Europe during World War II, in *The Great Game*.

"The Trotskyites can lay claim to this honor...."

"Today, the Trotskyites have a right to accuse those who once howled along with the wolves. Let them not forget, however, that they had the enormous advantage over us of having a coherent political system capable of replacing Stalinism.... They did not 'confess', for they knew that their confession would serve neither the party nor socialism."

Bukharin can in fact be "rehabilitated" by the Kremlin -- as in fact Khrushchev almost did in 1961 -- without changing anything. But what the bureaucracy in the Kremlin can never tolerate is a "rehabilitation" of the thousands of Trotskyists who died in Stalin's prison camps, because their program lives today as the greatest threat to the bureaucracy's continued parasitic rule. The "Trotskyist" Socialist Labour League lends support to Eurocommunist facelifting efforts by obscuring the real meaning of their "rehabilitation" of Bukharin, which it "welcomes" as an important victory, only urging them to go further. But then, three years ago these cynics could say that Hardy was practically a Trotskyist after the publication of his turgid novel of Stalinist soul-searching, *But the Dead Are Many*.

Not only Bukharin, but the thousands of other old Bolsheviks Stalin murdered will finally be accorded a fitting tribute only when the political revolution of the Soviet workers metes out proletarian justice to the corrupt usurpers in the Kremlin. Then, as Trotsky wrote in 1938,

"The victorious working class will look through all the trials, public and secret, and erect on the squares of the liberated Soviet Union monuments to the unfortunate victims of the Stalin system of baseness and dishonor." ■

Healyite exclusionism fails at LaTrobe

For some five years the political bandits of the Healyite Socialist Labour League (SLL) have maintained a rigid policy of excluding the Trotskyist Spartacist League (SL) from each and every one of their public events. More than anything they seek to avoid our exposure of the increasingly bizarre politics they still try to pass off as Trotskyism. As the most fervent local publicity agents for petty-bourgeois Arab nationalism -- expressed in their sordid "alliance" with Libya's fanatically Islamic military dictator Qaddafi -- the SLL has spent much of this year hawking around the country a film, *The Palestinian*, produced by their very own star of stage and screen, Vanessa Redgrave, a leading member of the SLL's British mentor, the Workers Revolutionary Party. In Melbourne and Sydney, where we were as usual excluded from the film screenings, slandered as Zionists and cop agents and threatened with violence, SL pickets protested against this gross violation of workers democracy.

But on 28 September the SLL, hiding behind the campus ALP Action Group, brought *The Palestinian* to LaTrobe University. Gangster-style exclusionism would not have gone down well with campus leftists well aware of the Spartacist Club's consistent and principled struggle for Trotskyism at LaTrobe. So, for the first time in five years, supporters of the SL were able to attend an SLL event, putting paid to the lie of SL "disruption". As the Healyites' circumspect suspension of their own exclusionist policy was no doubt a temporary local aberration, we wonder whose head is going to roll for this one.

Of course no floor discussion was allowed. But before the screening the audience was treated to an introduction by that relic of the ALP's now moribund "Socialist Left", Bill Hartley, himself

a shameless sycophant of Qaddafi and the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). Hartley devoted 15 minutes of a 20-minute talk to attacking a Spartacist Club leaflet distributed earlier. After crudely attempting to slander us as opposing any struggle of the Palestinians against their oppression, Hartley denounced our perspective for "class revolution" as, naturally, irrelevant to the "real" struggle. But for Hartley, class struggle is irrelevant everywhere. And why should anyone expect proletarian internationalism from a person whose phoney "Marxism" exists only to cover for the treachery of the ALP's Whitlams, Hawkes and Haydens? The SLL's political bloc with -- and cynical promotion of -- this spent left reformist says a lot about its "revolutionary" pretensions.

Predictably the film, a tedious publicity job for PLO head Arafat, was not worth the admission price. But perhaps we should be thankful for small mercies; at least the SLL shysters turned up. Power workers in Victoria's LaTrobe Valley are still trying to get refunds on tickets they paid for to a screening that just never happened! ■

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Revolutionary literature

Spartacist League/US election campaign: "For a socialist fight to save New York!"

New York City is the finance centre of the mightiest imperialist power in the world, a centre of international culture. It is also the city where ghetto youth unemployment reaches 86 percent and racist cops indiscriminately shoot down black youth at point-blank range; where trucks fall through gaping holes in the elevated expressways and miles of charred and gutted buildings make the black and Puerto Rican ghettos look like Dresden after being firebombed; where lumpenproletarian criminals and homicidal psychopaths make the streets and the subway trains unsafe at any hour. Nowhere, perhaps, in the advanced capitalist world is the crisis of capitalism more graphic and the urgency of socialist revolution more apparent.

That is the fighting theme of the first electoral campaign waged by the Spartacist League/US (SL/US) in more than a decade. SL/US supporters secured 3300 signatures -- more than double the number needed -- and beat back an anti-communist legal challenge against their petition, to secure Spartacist Party candidate Marjorie Stamberg's position on the ballot in November elections for New York State Assembly. Unlike the "socialist" liberal reformers of the pro-Moscow Communist Party (CP) and fake-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP), Stamberg runs on the basis of a Leninist program and a class-struggle record.

A former radical activist involved in the antiwar and civil-rights movements of the 1960s, a one-time leader of Oakland Women's Liberation and former staff writer for the trendy "critical" Maoist weekly, the *Guardian*, comrade Stamberg draws on nine years' experience as a phone worker, many of them as a leader of the Militant Action Caucus, a class-struggle oppositional grouping in the phone union. She explained the purpose of the campaign to an election rally:

"We run because we want the platform from which to rally the working masses and all the oppressed around the program that calls for a socialist fight to save New York -- a program of socialist revolution."

The Leninist character of the campaign is illustrated by the SL/US' revival of traditional Marxist practice affirming that the workers' candidates must always be responsible only to the party program, and designed to counteract the pressures and attitudes of bourgeois parliamentarism brought to bear on the revolutionary party's parliamentary representatives. Thus at the same time she wrote to the New York City Board of Elections accepting the Spartacist Party nomination, Stamberg also submitted to the SL/US a resignation from the position for which she is standing, signed but undated, to be tendered at the discretion of the SL/US Central Committee.

"Smash Big MAC! Expropriate the blood-suckers!"

To much of "Middle America", New York is a city of "welfare-chiseling" blacks and Latins run by Jews and Italians. When in 1975 the Democratic Party city administration requested an infusion of federal funds to meet perennial interest payments to the banks, the response of the Republican President, Gerald Ford, was -- as one New York City daily put it -- "Drop Dead!" The city was put into virtual receivership to the representatives of the financiers, the Municipal Assistance Corporation ("Big MAC"); jobs were slashed, wages frozen, even hospitals and fire stations closed. But the labour bureaucracy, firmly tied to the capitalist Democratic Party, refused to weld the outburst of labour strikes, student demonstrations and protest sit-ins into a powerful labour offensive. Instead they tried to bail out the city government by handing over billions of dollars in union pension funds to Big MAC.

In brochures emblazoned "For a Socialist Fight to Save New York" the Stamberg campaign outlines the strategy which the SL/US has advanced in the four years that the city has teetered on the edge of bankruptcy:

"For militant labor action to smash Big MAC, the EFCB [Emergency Financial Control Board] and the bank dictatorship! Cancel the debt!

Expropriate the banks and the blood-sucking utilities, Con Ed [electricity supply monopoly] and the phone company!... Rescind the layoffs! Restore the budget cuts! Jobs for all -- 30 hours work at 40 hours pay!"

Race war or class war?

In the absence of a unifying *class-struggle* program the racial tensions already pervasive in this "melting pot" -- exacerbated by the massive cutbacks and the traditional divide-and-rule ethnic politics of the Democratic Party -- could explode into full-scale race war, as the Crown Heights area of New York nearly did several months ago. When the cops wantonly murdered a young black man, black Democratic Party politicians directed the outrage of the area's black residents not into a unified protest against police brutality but into a race-hate mobilisation against the area's Jewish population, in a situation where rival black and Jewish vigilante squads already roamed the streets! In racist America, race war means racial genocide for the black masses. Yet the SWP and the other fake lefts criminally supported this pogromist mobilisation. Our comrades call for "labor/black defense against right-wing attacks", for an end to "discrimination in schools, housing, education, jobs" and for integration of the schools across race and class lines through busing -- "For a Working-Class Defense of Democratic Rights!"

In the election for state governor one of the main issues has been a grisly law-and-order debate: the Republican candidate demands that 13-year-old youth convicted of murder be sen-



Spartacist candidate Marjorie Stamberg at campaign rally.

tenced to the electric chair while the Democratic incumbent argues instead for the relative "leniency" of life imprisonment! Meanwhile liberal reformers advance stricter gun control as the panacea to end the rising spiral of crime and violence which festering capitalism spawns. The Spartacist campaign demands instead: "No guns for cops!... No to ethnic vigilantism! Jail killer cops!" Gun control means that "only the cops and the criminals are armed", explains Stamberg.

Only by casting off the bureaucracy which keeps it shackled to the Democratic Party can the labour movement avert the cataclysm of race war which New York foreshadows, and unite to lead the oppressed in a victorious struggle to overthrow their common capitalist enemy. In the words of the Spartacist campaign brochure,

"The situation cries out for the unions to launch a *workers party* to defend the interests of labor, the poor, minorities, and the hard-pressed middle classes against the capitalists' assault. Not only in New York but throughout the nation, workers need a party of their own to fight for a workers government which will seize all major industry without compensation and institute a planned economy in the interests of all working people."

While the CP habitually supports the "lesser evil" Democratic Party, the SWP's call for a

Continued on page six

Spartacist, CP, SWP candidates debate:

Class struggle or race war?

A 19 October "candidates night" -- featuring Socialist Workers Party (SWP) spokesman Ken Miliner and Communist Party (CP) spokesman Jay Shaffner -- at the Marxist Education Collective (MEC) in New York promised to be a dull evening ... until the MEC grudgingly agreed to allow a presentation by Spartacist candidate Marjorie Stamberg, turning the meeting into a real political debate between reformists and revolutionists, primarily the SWP and the SL. We present some of the highlights of the debate, which focused on the racially tense situation in the Crown Heights area of New York several months ago, from an account in *Workers Vanguard* no 218 (3 November 1978).

Stamberg: "... You guys might be running for governor but we're running this campaign the way the Bolsheviks ran, that is as a platform to raise our revolutionary program to the masses ... you're running for governor but we're running for state power...."

"What do communists do in that situation in Crown Heights?... When you have a situation where the blacks look at the Hasidic Jews as the KKK and the Hasidic Jews see the blacks as the Black Hundreds mobilizing for a pogrom.... It's simple -- not blacks against Jews but class against class.... We said there's nothing in any kind of communist program that calls for marching on a synagogue. But that's what you (SWP and CP) did and that's what you supported...."

Shaffner: "There is no revolutionary situation today. I'll say that.... Until we have trade unionists in (the government), workers in there, I'd rather have (Democratic congressman) John Conyers in there than representatives of GM and Ford."

SL floor speaker: "When the New York teachers were pressed to the wall by an unholy alliance of Republican Party legislators who had lined up disillusioned blacks ... both the Communist Party and Socialist Workers Party destroyed for a whole decade the possibility of a real fighting alliance between teachers and the black and oppressed communities, by strikebreaking and scabbing on that strike."

Miliner: "The 1968 teachers' strike by the UFT (United Federation of Teachers) was a racist strike against the demands of the black community.... The Socialist Workers Party helped organize teachers to cross those picket lines and go back into those schools! For us it is not an abstract question of every time some section of the working-class social democracy goes out on strike, we support that movement."

Shaffner: "... the question of demonstrating in front of a synagogue is not what the Communist Party would do. But that doesn't mean we would attack a movement of the people...."

Miliner: "You (the SL) talk about leading but all your criticisms (on Crown Heights) are an excuse to abstain from struggle."

Second SL floor speaker: "We stand accused tonight of not participating in a struggle. What's going on in Crown Heights is ethnic communal warfare. We plead guilty -- We don't want to be a part of that 'struggle'. Sometimes the masses move and they move in the wrong direction.... "Now I think it's real interesting that all of a sudden when we have a situation of an ethnic tinderbox, on the verge of race war, all of a sudden you're champions for self-defense. I want to know where you guys were in Boston where it was racist terror squads in the streets against the blacks. You were howling in the pages of your newspaper for the federal government -- to come in and 'protect' the black people...."

The CP and SWP reformists attack the SL for an "abstract class conception". But there is nothing "abstract" about it. Concretely, the CP and SWP are an obstacle to the development of revolutionary consciousness among the masses. Leninists are the only effective fighters for reforms, for they build the only sort of "movement" that can actually win them -- mobilising the oppressed under the leadership of the working class and its vanguard. Fighting for reforms does not impede revolutionary struggle, but reformism does. For reformism pits the sections of the oppressed against each other in competition for partial or even retrograde interests.

Maoist "in the service of peanut king Carter"

Spartacist League debates

Albert Langer

The first organised public debate in Australia between leading proponents of Maoism and Trotskyism took place at LaTrobe University on 12 October. Some 75 people came to hear Albert Langer, former leading cadre of the Peking-loyal Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) (CPA[ML]) and now the leading figure in the breakaway Movement for Independence and Socialism (MIS), confront David Grumont, a member of the Spartacist League (SL) Central Committee, on the question: "What is the Soviet Union? Where is it going?" Was the USSR, as Langer argued, a "capitalist, imperialist and fascist power" to be opposed even through a bloc with NATO; or was it a bureaucratically ruled workers state, necessitating of proletarian revolutionists both unconditional military defence against imperialist attack and a perspective of political revolution to restore the soviet democracy of the first six years of the Russian Revolution?

As comrade Grumont noted in his opening remarks, the choice of topic was "entirely appropriate". Attitudes to the Soviet Union have cleaved "a decisive dividing line ... between reform and revolution" within the international workers movement since the October Revolution. And by the conclusion of the two-hour debate and discussion it was clear that, as comrade Grumont put it:

"Langer's position on the Russian question leads directly to being the most abject apologists for counterrevolution -- a 'Marxist-Leninist' in the service of that peanut king, Jimmy Carter."

"Honest traitors"

Langer was not always simply a "Marxist" mouthpiece for the anti-Soviet designs of US imperialism. Like Grumont, he belonged to that generation of leftist students initially won to revolutionary politics through subjective identification with the anti-imperialist struggle of the Vietnamese masses in the late sixties. But unlike Grumont, Langer -- the most prominent Maoist student leader during the heyday of the New Left -- willingly subordinated his subjective desire to smash imperialist capitalism to the dictates of Peking's counterrevolutionary foreign policy. Grumont broke with Maoism over such issues as Peking's wholehearted support for the Ceylonese Bandaranaike regime's massacre of the Maoist/Guevarist-inspired JVP youth uprising in 1971 and went on to join the Trotskyist SL in 1974. At the time of the JVP rebellion, the CPA(ML) paper *Vanguard* had reprinted an article from the LaTrobe Maoist paper, *Red Moat*, by Grumont, then a member of the LaTrobe Worker Student Alliance and the pseudo-clandestine CPA(ML) youth group, the Young Communist League, praising the JVP -- only to issue a cringing "self-criticism" weeks later as Peking's role became clear. Only after Mao's successors had a falling out did Langer split from the CPA(ML), proclaiming his allegiance to the deposed "Gang of Four".

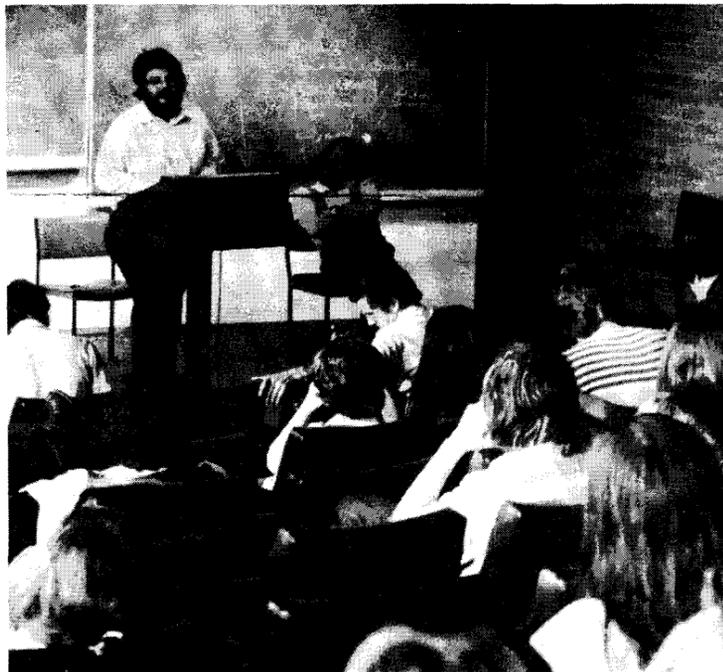
For five years the SL has been the only tendency in the Australian left to provide a coherent Marxist analysis of the political bankruptcy of Maoism. The choice of venue was fitting: the CPA(ML) front group (Students for Australian

Independence) at LaTrobe University, once a Maoist stronghold, has been reduced to a discredited, isolated band of ocker nationalists, their increasingly blatant counterrevolutionary politics subjected to relentless exposure by the campus Spartacist Club.

The CPA(ML) seized on this debate with "Trotskyites" -- in fact with a "person who betrayed [sic] the Worker Student Alliance to join the lunatic Trotskyite fringe, the Spartacist League" (*Vanguard*, 12 October) -- to demonstrate anew Langer's renegacy, and to bestow on the SL a rather unprecedented if backhanded compliment regarding our opposition to Australian *nationalism*:

"At least the Spartacist League, with their slogan 'Defend the Soviet Union' and their open opposition to Australian independence [] are honest traitors. The super-revolutionaries' leaders [Langer] are dishonest. They are traitors pure and simple."

The self-styled "Libertarian Socialist" anarchists at LaTrobe broke precedent by taking time out from the day-to-day apolitical antics involved in running the SRC to issue a politically serious three-page leaflet as well as intervene in the debate discussion. The reformists of the Communist Party (CPA) and Socialist Workers Party (SWP), on the other hand, tried hard to "ignore" the debate, conspicuously so.



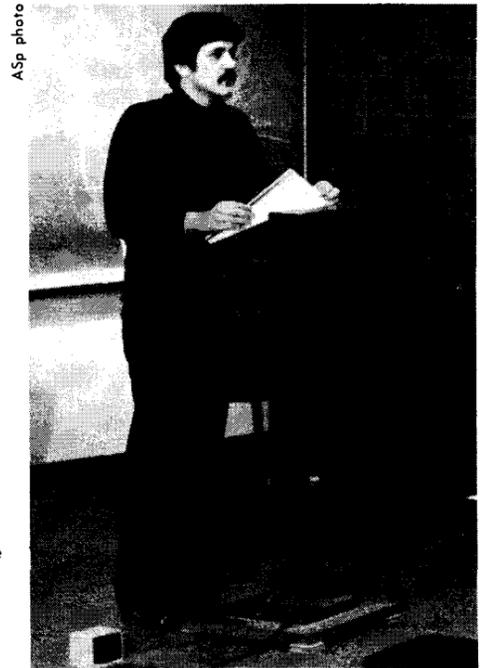
"Gang of Four" Maoist Albert Langer -- once an opponent of US imperialism, now apologist for NATO.

After accepting *paid* advertisements, both the CPA's *Tribune* and the SWP's *Direct Action* felt compelled to hold meetings of their leading editorial bodies in order to renege. The only SWPer at the debate was incapable of uttering so much as a word in defence of the SWP's claim to Trotskyism. And Langer's own MIS, as this "Marxist-Leninist" was quick to avow to the audience, had nothing to do with the debate. The chairman announced: "David, of course, is speaking on behalf of the Spartacist League, and Albert is apparently speaking on behalf of Albert!"

Langer vs Marx, Lenin

In his presentation comrade Grumont debunked the Maoist theory that capitalism had been peacefully restored in the Soviet Union -- a process Langer holds is now underway in China -- also simply because Khrushchev's rise to power put "bad ideas" in command. Calling this "subjective idealism run amok", a repudiation of the Marxist understanding that an overturn of property relations necessitated the violent *smashing up* of the state, Grumont said: "It is ludicrous to believe that Khrushchev's speech and the sending of Molotov to the provinces ... amounted to the smashing of the Soviet state".

Ideology and politics do play an important determining role in the development of a workers state, but they are not a substitute for material forces. The Stalin/Bukharin leadership's concessions to the kulaks in the mid-twenties -- part of the reactionary policy of building



Spartacist spokesman David Grumont at LaTrobe University debate.

"socialism in one country" -- paved the way for the 1928-29 kulak food boycott which posed a direct restorationist threat. But for that threat to be translated into a successful overturn of the proletarian dictatorship would have required an armed showdown and a massive social convulsion -- a *civil war* -- which Stalin headed off only through a ruthless physical liquidation of the kulaks.

Then as now the reactionary policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy pose the greatest single danger to the continued existence of the workers states. But had the Left Opposition to Stalin won out in the 1920s, opening the road to the *international* triumph of socialism, today there might well be no bureaucratic usurpers -- and no Maoists to label them "fascist". Uniquely, Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Thermidor -- the consolidation of a counterrevolutionary bureaucratic *caste* in 1924 -- has withstood the test of history.

Langer's arguments offered neither a coherent -- much less a Marxist -- analysis nor a revolutionary strategy deriving from it. Nor could they. As the SL speaker pointed out, the Maoist "analysis" is "a dogma, a myth", *invented* by the Peking bureaucracy to justify its unholy alliance with the most reactionary forces in the world -- NATO, the despised shah of Iran, racist South Africa, even the neo-fascist Ustasha -- against its Moscow rivals.

Marx defined capitalism to be predicated upon the individual ownership and competition of conflicting capitals and socialism to be a society based on the elimination of scarcity and all class distinctions. For Langer socialism is a period of "fierce and protracted struggle" and "the bourgeoisie in a [classless!] socialist society is to be found right inside the Communist Party [the vanguard of the proletariat!]". For Langer capitalism is *not* defined by private ownership of the means of production but by the existence of wage labour and commodity production, which Marx pointed out in his "Critique of the Gotha Program" were characteristics even of the lower phase of genuine, classless communist society! Having agreed that capitalism required a labour reserve of unemployed where none existed in the Soviet Union, Langer went on to assert that a chronic labour *shortage* also "implies the anarchy of capitalism". One impatient listener finally blurted out, "That's rot, Albert!"

An SL speaker from the floor attacked such wily redefinitions of basic Marxist terms:

"Bourgeoisie in the CP? Well, the bourgeoisie means something in Marxist terms. They're people who play a necessary economic role ... not just people with 'bad ideas'; ... they own capital...."

Langer could only retort that defining "a capitalist as someone who owns capital is circular"! For revolutionaries precise terminology and materialist theory are necessary to determine a

Continued on page seven

Trotskyism

versus

Maoism

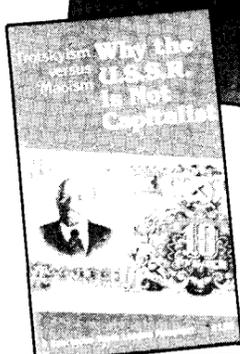
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While a guest of Fidel Castro . . .

Trotsky's assassin dies in Havana

Late last month Ramon Mercader del Rio, the man who on 20 August 1940 murdered Leon Trotsky, died of bone cancer in Havana, Cuba. Thus ended the life of a despicable being who would have been happily ignored by history had he not 38 years ago struck the crowning blow in the greatest political crime of this century: Stalin's systematic assassination of the entire remaining Bolshevik general staff which made the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Mercader's counterrevolutionary blow with a mountaineer's ice-ax struck down the man who together with Lenin led the October Revolution; the founder of the heroic Red Army, which prevailed in a terrible Civil War against tsarist armies and the expeditionary forces of 18 imperialist countries; the Marxist leader who carried forward the flame of Bolshevism in the darkest days of fascist barbarism and Stalinist betrayal. We neither forgive nor forget Mercader's infamous crime, and we bitterly regret that like his master, Stalin-Cain, this vile assassin died in bed instead of facing the revolutionary justice of a victorious proletariat.

There was no official announcement of Mercader's death, a fitting end for the cynical instrument that carried out Stalin's monstrous order, then to be put out in the cold by his patrons. Although his name was known throughout the world, after 20 years imprisonment in Mexican jails, Mercader spent the last 18 years in obscurity in dachas in Prague, Moscow and finally Fidel Castro's Havana. Why? In tsarist Russia the Narodniki and Social Revolutionaries used to trumpet their terrorist exploits far and wide as a revolutionary blow against the autocracy.

But Stalin's terror was in blatant contradiction to the communist aims his regime professed -- so it had to be excused with frame-up trials and Big Lie propaganda, or else hidden and denied. Ramon Mercader's single notable act in life was so odious that he could not show his face even in the countries dominated by the Kremlin, whose parasitic rulers he had served.

The assassins blame the victim

Ramon Mercader was the epitome of the mindless, utterly corrupt and cynical hit-man of Stalin's secret police, whose initials -- GPU (later NKVD) -- became the hated symbol of counterrevolutionary bureaucratic terror. From the day of his arrest until his release in 1960 he repeatedly denied his true political-criminal affiliations, maintaining the patently false story that he was "Jacques Mornard" (alias Frank Jacson), a disillusioned Belgian follower of Trotsky. Under this guise he had befriended an American Trotskyist, Sylvia Ageloff, and used her to worm his way into the Trotsky residence in Coyoacan, just outside Mexico City. At the time of the assassination he carried on his person a typed "confession" in the typical GPU style, claiming to be a member of the Fourth International (which he never was) who had become enraged because Trotsky supposedly treated the working class like "a dirty sock". With this crude fabrication the assassin's Kremlin bosses sought to divert the blame from Stalin onto the victim himself.

Trotsky had already warned after the May 25 assault on his house led by David Siqueiros that



Ramon Mercader, shortly after the assassination of Trotsky at Coyoacan, Mexico.

a new attempt on his life would soon come and the "assassins may use 'Trotskyist' label" (title of a statement to the Mexican press). But although Mercader's claim to be the son of a Belgian diplomat immediately fell apart (no Mornard was ever employed by the foreign ministry, the address he gave for his father's house was a store in the center of Brussels, the military school he claimed to have attended did not exist, the Belgian ambassador to Mexico swore he could not possibly be Belgian), and he quickly "forgot" his original prepared "confession", Moscow's agents brazenly continued their Big Lie campaign.

The assassin unmasked

Despite Mornard-Mercader's sealed lips, the murder of Trotsky was not forgotten and over the

years a series of revelations from every quarter have confirmed his true identity. First to discover it was Julian Gorkin, a former leader of the Spanish POUM (a centrist party wrongly labeled Trotskyist by the Stalinist and bourgeois press alike). Gorkin learned from Catalan Communist refugees that the murderer was the son of Caridad Mercader, who was a Stalinist women's leader and leading GPU agent in Barcelona in the Civil War (Sanchez Salazar and Gorkin, *Murder in Mexico* [1950]).

The identification of "Jacques Mornard" as Ramon Mercader was further substantiated by a court-appointed psychiatrist, Alfonso Quiroz, who had been frustrated in his attempts to elicit clues -- or the slightest signs of remorse -- from the prisoner. In 1950 Quiroz traveled to Spain where he sought fingerprints from the political police files to match those of Trotsky's assassin. An identical set was soon found -- those of Jaime Ramon Mercader del Rio, dating from 1935 arrest.

Further proofs and the direct link to the GPU were provided by former Spanish Communists. One of them, Enrique Castro Delgado, a top commander of the famed GPU-controlled Fifth Regiment of the Spanish Republican army, was a close friend of Caridad Mercader during the World War II years in Moscow. After Castro Delgado had fallen into disgrace Caridad continued to confide in him, and in one emotional visit told him the story of how she and her lover, Leonid Eitingon (known in Spain as General Kotov), had planned Ramon's murderous mission. When her son was taken by the Mexican police from the Trotsky residence, she and Eitingon were waiting in parked cars only a block away, ready to help him escape had he been able to carry out the crime undetected. For this heinous exploit Caridad had received from Stalin the Order of Lenin and for her son a Hero of the Soviet Union medal, the two highest awards bestowed by the Kremlin, which she showed to Castro (Julian Gorkin, *L'assassinat de Trotsky* [1970]).

Though hard-bitten Stalinists to this day maintain the fiction that Trotsky was killed by one of his disciples, a mountain of evidence shows in some detail just how the assassination was organized: ordered by Stalin, executed by the GPU with its special apparatus of professional murderers (for the most part trained in the Spanish Civil War), facilitated by the Spanish and Mexican Communist parties, in the witchhunt frenzy sparked by the Moscow Trials and whipped up by the Kremlin-subsidized press which throughout the world echoed a single bloodthirsty cry, "Death to Trotsky!" For years the Stalinist terror apparatus was running at full tilt with

the sole aim of wiping out any vestige of revolutionary opposition to the usurpers in the Kremlin, anywhere on the globe. The Moscow Trials liquidated the Bolshevik Old Guard and passed the death sentence on Trotsky. Ramon Mercader, a despicable worm with less than the morals of a Mafia trigger man, was the executioner.

The Mexican Communist Party and various of its bedfellows also on the GPU payroll constantly proclaimed that the masses of the working people fervently desired Trotsky's expulsion from the country. However, the funeral procession through the streets of Mexico City on August 22 demonstrated the emptiness of this lie. Huge crowds swelled the procession route -- 100,000 in all -- gathering to pay their last respects to the great



Trotsky in his study at Buyuk Ada, Turkey, after being exiled from the Soviet Union.

revolutionary, slain by the hand of Stalin. The PCM's refusal to acknowledge its own direct participation in the assassination until today, almost four decades later, demonstrates that the "Kill Trotsky" campaign was a hateful deed, universally despised, which they had to hide instead of crow about.

Once again in death Trotsky disproved the cynical Stalinist accusations that he was an agent of Wall Street. Alive he was hounded from country to country, finally unable to obtain asylum except in the Republic of Mexico. But when American Trotskyists made plans for a second funeral procession in New York City, the US government barred even the corpse of Trotsky from entering the country. The Socialist Workers Party newspaper, *Socialist Appeal* (31 August 1940) wrote: "The spectacle of the streets of New York filled with mourners for the man who symbolized world revolution was one which the capitalist class would permit under no circumstances".

Ramon Mercader, assassin of Trotsky, when he was released from jail in Mexico City in May 1960 declared to the press: "I killed a man for ideological motives ... it was a just act in its time". In October 1978 Ramon Mercader, assassin of Trotsky, unrepentant to the end, died in bed in Havana, a guest of the government of Fidel Castro.

Here was a man who had become the symbol of
Continued on page seven

Next issue:

How the Stalinists planned Trotsky's murder

British fascists . . .

Continued from page eight

Party and its Australian namesake (the IMG's sister groups, which actively defend free speech for fascists).

After warning that "ALL CALLS TO CANCEL CARNIVAL 2 WILL PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF THE NF", the IMG adds: "Of course Brick Lane must be defended. All ANL supporters in the East End will be ready to respond to any NF rampage. The ANL is also prepared to strike off 2000 more of its supporters". Now everyone knows what the IMG doubtless knew all along: the imposing-sounding "all ANL members in the East End" were a meagre handful indeed, and the "two thousand" to be "struck off" from the Carnival turned out to be more like two dozen.

Attempting to give its new-found pacifism a cynical left cover, the IMG solemnly warns: "Any idea of self-defence not based on mass action perspectives [read: Carnivals] will ultimately lead to reliance on the state". What hypocrisy! Listen to the IMG just one year ago, when the government banned an NF march in Tameside: "Can we proceed and say that we are *in principle* opposed to any bans imposed by the bourgeois democratic State on fascist or racist activity? We reply clearly and say: No, we are not opposed to these bans if they are specifically directed against the fascists..." (*Socialist Challenge*, 6 October 1977). And now these hypocrites find opposition to state bans a useful stick with which to beat the reformist leaders of the immigrant groups in the East End!

"Return to Lewisham"?

Hoping to fish in SWP/IMG troubled waters, the small centrist International-Communist League (I-CL) have denounced the Carnival betrayal and advocated a "return to Lewisham", to adventurist anti-fascist confrontations by small numbers of leftists. But the ICL, tailing behind the SWP/IMG, called in effect for a "better" popular front -- urging local anti-fascist committees to affiliate and arguing for democracy, activism and a bit more program to correct the ANL's "weaknesses".

The ANL has spat on and pulverised the fighting spirit and genuine desire to smash the fascists that the Lewisham demonstrators expressed. But the events of Lewisham shared with the ANL a total failure to see the mobilisation of the *organised working class* as the only way to destroy the fascist scum. They were the outgrowth of a *substitutionist* attempt to replace the weight of the unions with "far-left" militancy.

The workers of Britain must look to the example of the heroic battle of Cable Street in October 1936. Until two days before Mosley's Blackshirts were scheduled to march to the East End, the Stalinist Communist Party was planning a simultaneous peaceable rally in Trafalgar Square in support of the Spanish Popular Front. Only under overwhelming pressure from the London working class were they forced to call off this sham and mobilise to stop the Mosleyites in the streets. The hundred thousand workers who joined the demonstration that day were the force that was primarily responsible for arresting the crescendo of Blackshirt activity.

No to the ANL! Build workers defence squads!

Strong, well-organised workers defence squads, rooted in the unions and linked to the self-defence organisations of the immigrant communities, would teach the NF fascist thugs a well-deserved lesson and send them scurrying back to their ratholes. Instead the ANL and its hangers-on keep preaching that blowing balloons and holding rock concerts is the way to deal with these murderous scum. But as the 24 September Spartacist leaflet warned,

"The struggle for *workers defence squads* will never be undertaken by the union misleaders and other worthies who grace ANL platforms. Rather the fight to mobilise the power of the trade union movement is inseparably linked to

the fight to oust the Callaghans and Benns, the Duffys and Scargills [union bureaucrats, right or "left"], and replace them with a new revolutionary leadership of the labour movement.

"Such a leadership cannot be built on the basis of opportunism and betrayal in the style of the ANL and its partisans, but only through the fight for the programme of proletarian revolution. As we of the Spartacist League have said from the start: 'No to the popular-frontist ANL! Build workers defence guards to crush the NF!'" ■

(adapted from Spartacist Britain no 5, October 1978)

Iran . . .

Continued from page one

monarchy and to break the peasant masses from the grip of the medievalist "holy men".

The workers' strikes are clearly seen as distinct from the mullah-led protests. This was made explicit when strikes by taxi drivers, government, airline, hospital and postal employees, among others, broke out and the merchants of Teheran unexpectedly *opened* the city's main bazaar, which had been shut down in support of Khomeini and the mullah-led religious opposition. They wanted, said the merchants, "not to confuse the issue with the other strikes" (UPI dispatch, 7 October).

Strikes during the first week of October by workers at the Iranian National Bank, oil industry engineers and telephone and telegraph workers won quick promises of pay hikes from prime minister Jaafar Sharif-Emami. But the shaky regime could not stem the continually rising number of new strikes. On 7 October more state workers went out, forcing school and hospital closings and grounding the national airline. Then, on 8 October, the railway workers struck, halting all Teheran-bound trains and forcing passengers off.

On 11 October Iran's two major newspapers, *Ettelaat* and *Keyhan* ceased publication as 4000 employees walked out in an unprecedented protest against the military censorship. The next day printers refused to put out the paper of the shah's political machine, the Rastakhiz party. The strike wave spread to textile workers, agricultural labourers, the state-owned Sar Cheshmeh copper mines, and even to the 30,000 workers at the ultra-modern Isfahan steel works, one of the shah's pet industrial projects.

But it is the oil workers strike which promises to be the crucial test of strength. Many of the workers in the oilfields, located in the southwestern province of Khuzistan, are Arabs, subjected to national oppression at the hands of the brutally chauvinist Persian monarchy. For decades the oilfield workers were in the vanguard of the Iranian class struggle. In 1946, 100,000 of them took on the British oil monopolies, the real rulers of Iran in that period, and arms in hand fought off the tribesmen hired to smash the strike. It was yet another massive strike by the oil workers in 1952 which sparked the movement to nationalise the oil industry.

The oil strike has sent the shah's imperialist backers into a cold sweat. The struck oilfields are, after Saudi Arabia, the largest single source of petroleum exports to the industrialised capitalist world. On the very day that Sharif-Emami accused the strikers of "treason" and threatened a total military takeover of the industry, US president Carter was fawning over the shah's son in Washington. As Jimmy "human rights" Carter "wished the Shah our best" and praised the brutal, megalomaniacal thug for his "progressive administration", the US State Department issued yet another statement of support for the shah's regime, echoed by West Germany and Britain.

Frightened shah grants concessions

The tremendous social power of the working class is illustrated by the government's response to the massive strike wave. On the one hand the shah has undertaken ferocious repression against strikers and particularly the strikes' spontaneously evolved leadership. But at the same time the regime attempts to appease the workers with economic concessions, sometimes even substantial ones. Ground down under the staggering inflation of the "oil boom" of the 1970s, the strikers demanded wage increases of between 50 and 100 percent. The government immediately offered at least 25 percent.

Despite assertions to the contrary by Iranian leftists tailing Khomeini, Iran's industrial and white-collar workers have remained aloof from the mullah-led movement of the past year. The "general strikes" proclaimed by the mullahs and their bourgeois nationalist allies affected only the shopkeepers and merchants. The Muslims obtained working-class support only from the more unskilled labourers fresh from the countryside.

Large sections of the Iranian proletariat,

welded into collective units by the conditions of capitalist oppression, who have become urbanised and even secularised, have little in common with Khomeini's reactionary dreams. In one illustrative case, many of those forced off the trains by striking railwaymen were religious pilgrims! It is also interesting that the Fedayeen Guevarists, in an attempt to justify their abstention from working-class struggles, echo the mullahs' anti-Western ravings by attacking the workers' "petty-bourgeois habits" (ie exposure to television, movies, newspapers).

While the rest of the left fulsomely praises the "progressive" Muslim religious opposition, the Spartacist League has been unique in calling on the Iranian proletariat, not the mullahs, to overthrow the murderous and corrupt shah. As we wrote last month:

"The victory of a reactionary movement of Muslim traditionalism will represent a far-reaching historical *defeat* for communists, who seek a revolutionary emancipation from semi-feudal backwardness. The religious opposition stands on the heritage of the Middle Ages, opposed even to the paltry social advances for women in past decades." (*ASP* no 58, October 1978)

For all their talk of "armed struggle", it is highly unlikely that the mullahs would attempt to seize power directly. Their model is something like Pakistan where the military seized power in order to "purify" the Islamic state. Thus Khomeini declares that the "army must rise up and help overthrow the Shah" (*Washington Post*, 16 October) and enjoins his followers against cooperation with communists. Those Iranian leftists now tailing the mullahs in the name of the "anti-imperialist struggle" may soon find themselves forced to embrace the generals and SAVAK secret police torturers the mullahs are calling on to join the "holy" fight.

For an Iranian Trotskyist party

Despite their kaleidoscopic divisions, the Iranian Stalinists and guerrillaists are united in subordinating the proletariat's struggle against its exploitation and oppression to the needs of the "anti-imperialist" mullahs or "national bourgeoisie". There can be no revolutionary democratic gains -- land to the tiller, liberation of Iran's oppressed national minorities -- until the proletariat takes the power. And this requires a Bolshevik vanguard party to win the working masses to an independent and intransigent class policy in struggle against both the murderous shah and the reactionary mullahs.

The heroic struggles of the workers in the 1940s and 1950s were betrayed by the strikebreaking Stalinist Tudeh party. The call of the international Spartacist tendency to build an Iranian Trotskyist party means a struggle to prevent future betrayals and defeats of the working class and provide the revolutionary leadership which can bring the proletariat to power. Down with the shah! Down with the mullahs! For an Iranian Workers and Peasants Government! ■

(adapted from Workers Vanguard no 217, 20 October 1978)

New York . . .

Continued from page three

labour party to be built by the current crop of pro-capitalist bureaucrats is nothing but a call to transfer Democratic Party politics to an imitation of the reformist ALP. The call for a mass workers party which genuinely represents workers interests necessarily implies a political struggle *within the union movement* to oust the pro-capitalist labour fakers.

Petty-bourgeois liberals, reformists and eco-freaks, accepting the crumbling capitalist framework of choice offered by New York's massive urban decay, oppose projects like the construction of a much-needed new expressway on Manhattan's West Side. In contrast the Spartacist campaign calls for building a "ten-lane West Side Highway underground" as well as "billions to save the subways". In numerous rallies Stamberg has hammered home "the one main point that we want to bring out in this election: if you talk about doing *anything* in this city, whether you're talking about education or housing or jobs, you find yourself talking about socialist revolution".

"Not at the ballot box but on the picket lines"

But even in the midst of the New York crisis, that is one thing the CP and SWP would *never* talk about. While the CP's candidates in the state elections say "people before profits" and the SWP's say "human needs before profits", Stamberg says, "There will never be *anything* before profits in the capitalist system!" Both these reformist outfits serve up the usual smorgasbord of tax-the-rich fare: one exempts incomes below \$25,000, the other below \$30,000. Both redefine socialism as if it were a matter of the capitalist rulers merely adjusting their "priorities"



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between merciless profit-gouging and token "human rights" hypocrisy. The SWP has even gone so far as to portray what it passes off as the Transitional Program -- Trotsky's program to mobilise the working class for the seizure of state power -- as an amendment designed to expand the "Bill of Rights in the [bourgeois!] American Constitution to include protection from the new problems created by present-day capitalist society" (US *Militant*, 17 January 1975).

Revolutionary Trotskyism has nothing to do with illusions in legislating "socialism" through bourgeois parliaments. The Spartacist campaign is addressed to the burning issues of the international class struggle, first and foremost Carter's anti-Soviet "human rights" crusade, openly calling for the defence of "the gains of the October Revolution" -- a refreshing contrast to the habitual, mealy-mouthed cowardice of the fake-Trotskyist SWP and the Stalinist CP. And denouncing the sort of parliamentary cretinism typified by the SWP's "Bill of Rights", Stenberg concluded a 14 October campaign speech by underlining the genuine communist attitude toward parliament:

"When Lenin was asked by Badayev, a Bolshevik deputy in the czarist Duma, what bills the Bolsheviks should advance, he replied: 'You had better introduce a "Bill" stating that in three years time we shall take you all, black-hearted landlords, and hang you all on the lamp-posts. That would be a real "Bill" [applause].

"So that's what our campaign is about. We say that the future of the working masses lies not at the ballot box, but on the picket lines, the battle lines of the class struggle." ■

Langer debate . . .

Continued from page four

correct revolutionary strategy. But what use are they to Maoists, who do not intend to lead workers to power? Langer himself drew the explicitly reformist conclusions of his attempt to "explain" a peaceful counterrevolution. Grudgingly conceding that "some bosses would have to be shot and others would join the Communist Party", Langer claimed:

"If you had a revolution in Australia tomorrow, the social system wouldn't have fundamentally changed the day after tomorrow. You'd go back to work the next day and you'd find that you'd probably have the same bosses."

Yes, under the dictatorship of the proletariat the class struggle continues ... with the one rather enormous difference that the workers then have state power and can subject the bosses to their will. This colossal conquest -- the armed suppression of the exploiters -- vanishes from Langer's view of the "revolution".

Langer "doesn't know" about Hungary

At one point in his presentation Langer remonstrated that with his break from Peking, his politics could not be seen as simply a justification for Peking's betrayals: "Which nationalist bureaucracy am I capitulating to now?" But the crimes of the crew in the Forbidden City did not begin with Hua Kuo-feng, and Langer repudiates none of them. He condemned the Soviet bureaucracy's quite blatant support to reactionary regimes in Ethiopia and elsewhere. But challenged with Mao's support to the crushing of the JVP rebellion in Ceylon, Langer could only plead that he didn't "know a great deal about it"! Langer denounced the "Soviet tanks driving down the streets" in Czechoslovakia in 1968 as an example of Soviet "imperialism". But when confronted by an SL supporter with the even more brutal suppression of the Hungarian revolution of 1956, Langer didn't "know much about it" either.

Is Langer unaware that when the Hungarian workers rose up against the Stalinist bureaucracy in Budapest, this purported "new ruling class" fragmented almost overnight -- with the great majority of the lower layers going over to the insurgent workers? Or that the Maoists, who feign sympathy for the Czech workers, characterised the Hungarian uprising as a "fascist counterrevolution"? Or that Mao urged Khrushchev, who in the prism of Maoist hindsight was already on the "capitalist road", to drown the Hungarian uprising in blood? No. Langer's "ignorance" was eloquent testimony that the Hungarian revolution stands as a crushing refutation of all the "new class" theories and as an

exposure of Maoist hypocrisy about "Soviet social-imperialism".

These were dangerous political waters. He only wanted to talk about Australia, said Langer. "You don't have too much trouble with NATO", shot back an SL member from the floor. And in fact, in response to a question about the 1949 coal strike, he admitted he didn't "know too much" about that either, and had nothing to say about how to break Australian workers from the ALP.

In sum, Albert Langer had very few answers at all. Incapable of defending -- or even discerning -- the gains of October, he is ipso facto incapable of offering a strategy to extend them. Not surprisingly, Langer the self-styled Leninist found during the discussion that the anarchists "were much more interesting than the Sparts", and afterwards went off to huddle in a corner with anarchist spokesman Ted Murphy. The question of the state is after all the fundamental criterion dividing reformists from revolutionists, and on that question -- though they come from opposite directions -- the Stalinists and the anarchists share common ground against Leninism, as they did in practice during their cohabitation in the Spanish popular front in 1936. In defending their hobby-horse that workers control is the be-all and end-all of class struggle, the anarchists in their leaflet on the debate recognised who their historical opponents were too:

"The Spartacists are only being honest when they openly proclaim that workers control is useful only as a means to disintegrate capitalist authority.... They are simply restating original Leninism which the other modern Trotskyist and Leninist groups conveniently forget."

Stalinism -- a destroyer of revolutionary cadre

In his concluding remarks comrade Grumont observed that Langer was "a Stalinist without a mother country, which means that you're in a lot of trouble. That's why the MIS is going nowhere!" He noted the "extreme historical pessimism" represented by Langer's thesis that twice in a generation the proletariat has acquiesced to the restoration of bourgeois rule without the slightest discernible resistance. If Langer and his followers were serious, said Grumont, this should make them "question whether the proletariat has the capacity to rule".

By contrast he described the history of the Left Oppositionists, who refused to capitulate to Stalin, who refused even in the slave-labour camps to bloc with opponents of the dictatorship of the proletariat against the Stalin regime, who went to their deaths proclaiming their allegiance to the October Revolution. Unlike their Stalinist torturers and the numerous waves of revisionists who seized on Stalin's crimes to repudiate the revolution he had usurped, the Trotskyists were uniquely committed to a program representing the historic interests of the working class -- socialist revolutions to overthrow the capitalist class internationally and workers political revolution to cast out the parasitic bureaucracy -- not the narrow, privileged interests of that bureaucracy expressed in "socialism in one country".

In concluding, comrade Grumont pointed to the cynical destruction of cadre which is the heritage of Stalinism and every other revisionist current:

"Those tendencies that say the Soviet Union has gone capitalist eventually capitulate to the capitalists. And this is the tragic element. In 1966, despite the fact that he was a Stalinist, Langer and a whole generation of New Leftists and students wanted to fight against imperialism -- wanted to fight against capitalism -- in the antiwar movement. And what do you have now? Someone who spends most of his time writing things in *Nation Review* calling for a NATO build-up, calling for the capitalist class in Europe and America to build up its armaments. And that's a tragedy, that's a waste of human potential." ■

Trotsky's assassin . . .

Continued from page five

Stalinist perfidy, a reminder that Stalinism was/is far more than a "cult of the personality", far more even than a series of crimes to be swept under the rug with a single secret speech by Khrushchev. No one would have batted an eyelash if he had died in Moscow or in Prague where the Kremlin's tanks hold sway. But in Cuba? This must be a shock to a generation of young would-be Trotskyists who have been educated in the belief that Castro is an "unconscious Marxist", that Che Guevara was a closet Trotskyist and Cuba was indeed "the first free territory of America".

The anti-Trotskyist revisionists who have been singing hosannas to the Cuban Stalinist bureaucracy for the last 17 years -- the self-styled

United Secretariat of the Fourth International, led by Ernest Mandel and Joseph Hansen -- will have some difficulty dealing with this unpleasant fact. Their French comrades have already taken the bit between the teeth, so to speak, in an article entitled "Mercader was useless" (*Rouge*, 21-22 October). Useless? The assassination of Trotsky was a tremendous blow to the fledgling Fourth International. It was part of a mammoth campaign to everywhere behold the Trotskyist movement. Before Trotsky Stalin's gangsters had murdered Leon Sedov, his son and head of the FI's International Secretariat; his secretaries Erwin Wolf (in Spain) and Rudolf Klement (in Paris). After the infamous night of 20 August 1940 the GPU terror machine rolled on, joining the Gestapo in shooting down scores of Trotskyist leaders across Europe. They very nearly accomplished their counterrevolutionary aim and did in fact succeed in decimating the Fourth International so severely that the Trotskyists did not stand at the head of the masses when revolutionary situations broke out in Europe upon the collapse of the Third Reich.

But perhaps this is just an infelicitous headline? No, the *Rouge* article begins:

"It is not to the honor of the present Cuban leadership, headed by Fidel Castro who was an intransigent revolutionary, to have allowed Ramon Mercader to finish his sorry existence on Cuban soil; to have decided that, in the political balance sheet, a small service rendered to the Kremlin masters weighs heavier than the memory and morals of history. This is one of the little acts of cowardice which history does not forgive."

With a demonstrative slap on the hand, these pseudo-Trotskyists think they have at least absolved themselves of responsibility for "the present Cuban leadership". It is not the first time they have had to make such shamefaced apologies: we recall in particular Castro's support for the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. But Mandel and company are at least consistent. For those who remained silent at the arrest of the Cuban Trotskyists in 1963 -- in some cases even apologizing for "Che" and "Fidel" -- Mercader's death in Havana can only be another blemish, perhaps a mere pimple, on the healthy face of a revolutionary regime which simply "lacks the forms of workers democracy".

However, for those who genuinely seek to continue the revolutionary struggle of Leon Trotsky, it is not a question of "forms" or "little acts of cowardice". We do not counsel Castro and Brezhnev how to polish up their "honor". There is no honor among Stalinists, as the whole saga of Ramon Mercader graphically demonstrates. Nor do we call on the Eurocommunists of today -- Stalin's gangsters of yesterday -- to "rehabilitate" Trotsky as part of their efforts to prove their "democratic" credentials to the imperialist bourgeoisie. The assassination of Leon Trotsky will be avenged and revolutionary communist morals restored in the only way possible: through social revolution in the capitalist countries and workers political revolution to root out the Stalinist bureaucracies of the degenerated/deformed workers states, establishing throughout the globe the class democracy of soviet rule.

Trotsky's dying words were those of intransigent combat: "I am close to death from the blow of a political assassin. Please say to our friends -- I am sure of the victory of the Fourth International! Go forward!" This is our task today as we struggle toward an International Trotskyist League and the rebirth of the Fourth International. ■

(abridged from *Workers Vanguard* no 218, 3 November 1978)

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Fake left "carnivals" while fascists march

British Anti Nazi League scabs

The long economic decay of British imperialism has reached the point where the living standards of its workers are now lower than those in Spain. Simultaneously, a significant black and Asian population, the after-effect of a once great colonial empire, is crowded into the ghettos of Britain's major cities. These explosive social conditions have spawned a racist anti-immigration "backlash" as well as an aggressive fascist movement, the National Front (NF). Emerging as a serious, although still marginal, factor in British politics over the past six years, the NF recruits white lumpens and petty bourgeois through provocative and intimidating marches through non-white immigrant neighbourhoods and carries out vicious thug attacks on immigrants and leftists. In Britain's on-going social crisis such gangs are destined to become the shock troops of capital against the organised labour movement.

The National Front scored an ominous political victory on 24 September when close to 2000 fascists, escorted by police, successfully staged a provocative "March Against Communism" through the Asian immigrant area of Brick Lane in London's East End. A counter-demonstration of perhaps 1200 leftists and immigrants, pitifully weak and disorganised, stood no chance of getting near the fascists. NF fuhrers John Tyndall and Martin Webster were able to boast that "We have never been stronger" to an end-of-march rally near the NF's new headquarters in the East End. That night a gang of 50 to 60 of these thugs "celebrated" their easy success by rampaging through a predominantly Asian estate off Brick Lane, smashing shop windows and threatening local residents.

That very same Sunday the Anti Nazi League

was well in the East End the huge crowd stood in the sun and "rocked against racism" in Brixton, and only a handful of ANL supporters joined the Brick Lane anti-fascist demonstration which was called by the Hackney and Tower Hamlets Defence Committee. Yet despite the ANL supporters' chronic lack of organisation and manifest ill-preparedness to fight the fascists, the sheer numerical weight of the thousands on the "anti-Nazi" jamboree could have been sufficient to stop the Front marching with impunity. In a leaflet distributed at the Brick Lane counter-demonstration, the Spartacist League/Britain (SL/B -- sympathising section of the international Spartacist tendency) demanded:

"THIS CARNIVAL SHOULD BE CALLED OFF IMMEDIATELY! Everyone who seriously wants the fascists to be crushed should be in the East End today. Anyone who goes to Brixton with the Carnival is SCABBING on this struggle."

The 50-strong SL/B contingent was the largest at Brick Lane and the only one to raise slogans openly attacking the ANL's betrayal.

The SWP (whose Australian co-thinkers are

known as the International Socialists) launched the ANL last year after a series of inconclusive confrontations in the streets between the "far left", the fascists and police, most notably at Lewisham (see *ASP* no 46, September 1977). Furiously red-baited by the bourgeois press and without a firm base of support in the working class for its street-fighting tactics, the SWP sought respectability and numbers in a pacifist, social-patriotic, class-collaborationist alliance.

The union bureaucrats, "left" Labour MPs and even lords (Lord Avebury of the bourgeois Liberal Party) who inhabit the ANL are happy to stand under the Union Jack and mouth a few "anti-Nazi" homilies. They are happy to sponsor dangerous pleas to the bourgeois authorities to ban the fascists (calls which have repeatedly resulted in state bans on left-wing and anti-fascist events). But they would shrink in horror from the idea of mobilising the ranks of the unions and the black and Asian communities to crush the NF in the streets -- the only strategy which can truly stop the fascists. It is not without reason that Trotsky insisted, "a merciless exposure of the theory and practice of the People's Front is therefore the first condition for a revolutionary struggle against fascism" (*Transitional Program*).

In the 30 September *Socialist Worker*, SWP patriarch Tony Cliff attempts to defend the Carnival ("the biggest anti-racist demonstration since the thirties"), while bemoaning the "failure of organisation" which allowed the fascists to march unimpeded to their rallying place. In

fact the SWP consciously acted to keep as many people as possible out of the East End. But Cliff has another, more honest, argument. He estimates that between twenty and forty thousand militants would have heeded a call by the SWP to go from Hyde Park to Brick Lane. However, if



SL/B contingent at a 16 July anti-fascist demonstration in Brick Lane.

Spartacist Britain

this had happened -- if the peaceful, orderly festivities had been interrupted by militant anti-fascist action -- "the result would have been" ... the "disintegrating of the ANL"! Thus Cliff admits the shabby truth: in order to hold the ANL together its supporters had to be prevented from confronting the fascists. Cliff could not have labelled more clearly the essence of the ANL as a popular front, just as the Carnival betrayal exposed in practice its disastrous consequences for the oppressed: the subordination of the class struggle to the preservation of "unity" with the "progressive", "anti-fascist" bourgeoisie.

But so egregious was the Carnival atrocity that it has caused a deep disturbance in the SWP's own ranks. One of a spate of critical letters to *Socialist Worker* protested bitterly (14 October): "And should you be one of the thousand of anti-fascists who have defended Brick Lane you might have felt sick that the Nazis were allowed a victory while 100,000 people tried to throw cans through the mouth of a model of Martin Webster". "The mistake was political", another charged. "The SWP is in danger of treating the ANL as a popular front.... Tony Cliff more or less admitted this...." To all those of his followers asking, in effect, "why are we betraying", Cliff replied with pathetic demagoguery: "To demand from our allies in the ANL that they agree with ALL the letters of our socialist alphabet was quite rightly avoided by us" (*Socialist Worker*, 7 October). Cliff's attempt to confuse the ANL with a united front for anti-fascist action is hopeless because this pretence has now been blown sky-high.

The SWP's feeble excuses don't hold a candle to the arguments of the International Marxist Group (IMG). These same people who used to propound adventurist battles with the cops as an anti-fascist strategy now positively glory in the ANL's betrayal. The back page headline of the 28 September *Socialist Challenge* asks: "Were we right to go to Brixton?" and defiantly responds: "YES! YES! YES!"

While the SWP kept Carnival marchers away from Brick Lane by lying, the IMG helpfully provided a political alibi in a leaflet entitled "Unity for Mass Action -- Only Way to Build Self-Defence". The arguments in the leaflet -- repeated and elaborated in the subsequent *Socialist Challenge* article -- are strongly reminiscent of the social-democratic American Socialist Workers

Continued on page six



20 August 1977 *Socialist Worker* hailed adventurist "far-left" street confrontation with fascists at Lewisham, promising "we'll do it again". But they didn't -- 6 May 1978 issue enthuses over "magic" ANL "carnivals". The 24 September "carnival" directly scabbed on anti-fascist fight.

(ANL), the main anti-NF "alliance", mobilised sixty to one hundred thousand people to Hyde Park for its second Fun and "Magic" Carnival. Incredibly, it marched them off in the opposite direction -- to Brixton where, according to the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the driving force behind the ANL, "The sun was out, the faces of the people were bright, happy.... All was celebration" (*Socialist Worker*, 30 September). For more than two weeks, immigrant groups in the East End and small left-wing organisations had repeatedly called on the ANL to mobilise its forces to stop the fascists. But to no avail. *The Front's* victory was possible only thanks to this despicable betrayal by the ANL and the SWP.

Lulled by ANL leaders into thinking that all