

Australasian

# SPARTACIST



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## US imperialism provokes Soviet Union Whose Poland?



Warsaw Pact troops from Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania and the Soviet Union on military manoeuvres.

Poland is coming unstuck. The "Solidarity" union movement (Solidarność) is polarizing. The Polish Communist party is in chaos. The economy is in a shambles. And United States imperialism is wildly seeking to provoke a Russian intervention. Reagan and Haig have seized upon Poland as a pawn for their superheated Cold War drive against the Soviet Union. And their ultimate aim is to overthrow the remaining conquests of the October Revolution, the main bastion of proletarian state power. Revolutionaries and all class-conscious workers must oppose this imperialist provocation and unconditionally defend the Soviet bloc states against counterrevolutionary attack.

Washington hectors its West European "allies" to stiffen their anti-Soviet resolve with nuclear missiles aimed at the "Russian aggressor in Poland". General Haig tries to line up NATO governments to break off economic and diplomatic relations with the USSR. American secretary of war Weinberger threatens terrible reprisals if the Soviet Union intervenes. He even flashes the US menacing "China card", threatening to arm Peking, presumably with atomic weapons capable of reaching Soviet cities. And the Chinese are ready, even eager: they don't just want thermo-

### For proletarian political revolution!

nuclear missiles, they want to use them! Ever since World War II the American bourgeoisie has tried to talk itself into the idea that they can nuclear bomb the Soviet Union and live! This goal is now openly stated by the Reagan administration. White House Russia expert Richard Pipes says the Soviets face the choice of "changing their Communist system in the direction of the West or going to war". Reagan/Haig believe that Soviet intervention in Poland will remove all obstacles in their preparations for such a war.

Even if the Kremlin doesn't intervene, the US has already made Poland a focal point of the Cold War with its endless talk of "invasion by osmosis", "indefinite extension of Warsaw Pact war games", etc. The US "seem[s] to be playing some kind of game with a whole nation", exclaimed one Pole angered by Washington's constant alarms (*New York Times*, 6 April). Indeed, Reagan and Haig have made it clear they want full-scale Russian intervention, and they're doing their best to spark it. They want to

see Polish workers under the eagle and the cross throwing Molotov cocktails at Soviet tanks. They want to provoke a bloodbath in Poland so that they can use the battle-cry of "Russian aggression" to push forward on all fronts in their drive toward World War III.

Imperialist politicians and the Western press all speak of a Soviet "invasion of Poland". In fact the Soviet Army drove the Nazi German forces out of Poland and liberated the country in 1944-45. They have been there since, and today two Russian divisions guard the vital communications links to East Germany and the NATO front. To demand withdrawal of Soviet troops from Poland is to demand that Warsaw leave the Warsaw Pact — tantamount to calling for unilateral disarmament of the Soviet bloc. It is not an invasion that is posed, but a Russian military intervention into the civil life and class struggle in Poland. And those processes have undergone important developments during nine months at full boil.

The massive strike wave in the Baltic

ports last August brought Polish workers before a historic choice: with the bankruptcy of Stalinist rule dramatically demonstrated, it would be either the path of bloody counterrevolution in league with Western imperialism, or the path of proletarian political revolution. With the clerical-nationalist influence in Solidarność and now the emergence of a mass organization of the landowning peasantry, the counterrevolutionary danger remains great. But a process of political differentiation has begun. Above all, "Solidarity" has come to embrace the whole of the Polish working class, with all of its tensions and contradictions. One million Polish party members have joined the new unions, and the party is in deep trouble — hardliners isolated, the leadership weakened, the ranks in uproar. And the church has pulled back from Walesa & Co, hoping to maintain itself as a stable pole for counterrevolution in the face of Russian military intervention.

This political fluidity by no means signifies a fundamental change in the relationship of forces, which is still distinctly unfavorable from a revolutionary standpoint. But if a genuine Leninist-Trotskyist opposition were precipitated,

Continued on page eight

## Eyewitness to betrayal in El Salvador ...6

SYDNEY, 25 April — Elections for union positions are in progress in the Printing and Kindred Industries Union (PKIU) chapel at newspaper publisher John Fairfax & Sons. Voting for Father of the Chapel (FOC), the chief executive position, has already been completed, with the incumbent, Peter Bayliss, being re-elected. In separate elections being held next week for Deputy FOC, however, printing union members have a unique opportunity to vote for a class-struggle course for the union, by voting for Ron Rees. Rees, a PKIU militant for 9 years, is offering the only militant alternative program to the present do-nothing, right-wing chapel executive.

Recently Fairfax celebrated the 150th anniversary of its "flagship", the *Sydney Morning Herald*, with a lavish and nauseatingly self-congratulatory publicity exercise. Well might they celebrate, for although the crucial introduction of new computerised typesetting technology is running behind schedule, this is not because of any effective, united defence of jobs and conditions by the unions. In fact, the Fairfax moguls have been winning all along the line by playing on the many trade and craft divisions between the various unions.

Fairfax workers face big struggles ahead because of the transition to new technology, which potentially allows the company to eliminate several hundred production workers' jobs. But a defeatist mood has been building up in the PKIU ranks in the years since 1976, when a bitterly-fought nine-week strike over the introduction of new technology went down to defeat. Though marked by considerable militancy and occasionally by large mass pickets, the 1976 strike ended with a redundancy agreement which now has about a third of PKIU members at Fairfax in a second-class "permanent temporary" category, posing the possible forced redundancy of these workers. More importantly, the 1976 strike failed to achieve the necessary unity aimed for by the setting up of a "Combined Unions Committee" (CUC), since journalists massively crossed the picket lines (and later obtained work on the Visual Display Terminals [VDTs], part of the computerised replacement of traditional typesetting methods).

In January 1980 another militant PKIU strike succeeded in defending the job of a victimised union delegate, but its impact was weakened by the failure to stop or even seriously hinder the production of scab papers. The picket lines were smaller than in 1976, and once again journalists and others crossed picket lines. Several members of non-striking unions did honour them, however, and were defended by the PKIU. One of these, Linda Menzie, was the first clerk in recent memory to do so.

Members of the metal trades unions at Fairfax, principally the Amalgamated Metal Workers and Shipwrights Union (AMWSU), were among the most militant on the PKIU picket lines; but the traditional solidarity between the militant metal workers and the PKIU suffered a serious setback later that year. The three metal unions struck for 11 weeks over what was primarily a safety issue, but the PKIU chapel executive of Don Paget and Ian Jolliffe kept its membership at work throughout most of the strike. Since the presses could not be kept running without the metal workers (who repair and maintain them), this meant that the PKIU, under various transparent guises, was breaking its own traditional principle of not working with the company "staff", which is openly scab labour.

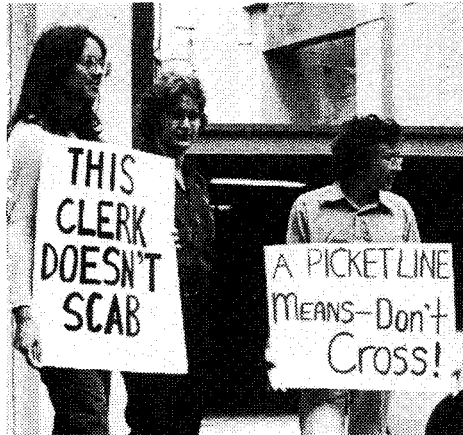
Rees was the only member of the PKIU to refuse to do this, by honouring the metal workers' strike throughout. This he did in the face of threats from the state branch leadership of his union to withdraw his union rights (which would have meant losing his job). In the end his job was only saved because the metal workers refused to resume work without him.

Then in May of last year, the Australian Journalists' Association (AJA), fed up with the bosses' refusal to grant a wage rise for operation of the VDTs, held its first-ever national strike, and even set up picket lines at various newspapers. This gave the PKIU a golden opportunity to

# Class-struggle choice in Fairfax PKIU elections

break down decades of hostility, and win the AJA to its side for future struggles, by honouring the AJA lines and shutting down scab production. But the leadership of the state branch saw this as its opportunity to step into the Fairfax chapel and advocate crossing the AJA lines, thereby undermining its rivals, Paget and Jolliffe. Playing on the demoralisation and past hatred for the journo, the branch leaders, particularly Gordon Cooke, a long-time supporter of the views of the Moscow-line Socialist Party (SPA), were able to sway the chapel majority. But over 100 members defied the "leadership" and walked out to honour the AJA picket. Paget and Jolliffe honoured the picket line, but resigned their Chapel posts without a struggle.

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Fairfax 1980: Linda Menzie (left), Ron Rees fight for "one out, all out".

Thus the current chapel executive of Bayliss & Co, which was first nominated and elected behind picket lines in a struck factory, can only stand for sellout, betrayal, and scabbing on their fellow workers. And their record has borne this out. In recent negotiations over a log of claims, they presented the log of claims to the company as a fait accompli, without checking with the membership first; they completely sold out the demand for a 35-hour week which they had formally touted; and they swept the sectional claims of many workers under the rug. The highly skilled photoengravers were singled out for isolation and set up for defeat in their separate-award claim as

well. With such "leadership", it is little wonder that PKIU ranks are doubtful that a strike could be won; but until now, no alternative to break the cycle of sell-outs and defeats has been offered. Neither Paget nor Jolliffe are even contesting executive posts, despite the fact that militants still sometimes look to them for leadership.

Rees is thus the only candidate for any post with any sort of program for mobilising the membership to fight back against Fairfax' attacks. His election statement, appropriately titled "Get the union off its knees", is a blueprint for how the PKIU, together with the other Fairfax unions, can win against the rapacious, anti-labour Fairfax giant. "We can win strikes, but only if we learn the lessons of past defeats", says Rees.

"Winning means mounting mass pickets to keep out scabs, or plant occupation if necessary to stop production. It means starting a real committee elected from the shop floor of all the unions in the plant (not the fake body that presently exists), based on the principles of one out, all out, and no union crosses another's pickets." Rees' statement calls for "one militant union in the newspaper industry" based on these principles. "As for new technology", he says,

"... we cannot simply oppose its introduction but it should not be at the expense of the workers' livelihoods. Let the bosses' profits suffer, not the workers' jobs! This means a shorter working week without loss in pay, ie an actual shortening of the number of hours worked by each section."

Such demands can only be won by breaking down the craft divisions and by building unity between printers, metal workers, journalists, clerks and others so that strikes will no longer be defeated by "unionists" helping Fairfax' "staff" scab on strikers.

Rees is a well-known supporter of the Spartacist League, and his campaign is a sharp contrast to the usual activity of supporters of other, supposedly "revolutionary" organisations. He puts forward a program of transitional demands pointing the way to the struggle for state power by the working class as a whole. Noting that Neville Wran's ALP state

government is a "bosses' government", Rees recalls the many incidents of attacks by Wran's cops on the picket lines of printing workers, and on gay rights demonstrators in 1978 as well. His statement calls for "organised workers self-defence against anti-union attacks by cops, scabs, fascists", and he backed this up recently with a motion in a branch meeting calling for PKIU support for defence of Bill Kelly, the Wollongong unionist who was shot.

Pointing out that in addition to using craft divisions, the company "uses their oppression as women to keep the clerks industrially weak", Rees urges the PKIU to demand wages equal to the high PKIU rates for all VDT operators. Only in this way can the PKIU protect its own interest in maintaining its wage scales, he notes. Rees' statement also attacks the Arbitration system as a bosses' institution, and calls for a workers government "based on workers organisations (not the farcical bosses' parliament)" to institute a socialist planned economy.

Internationally, Rees notes that Reagan has made El Salvador the front line in the new Cold War, and calls on the unions to support "military victory to the left-wing insurgents in El Salvador" as part of an overall class struggle policy:

"The current epidemic of right-wing union bashing is closely linked to the anti-communist cold war atmosphere whipped up against the Soviet Union... Just as workers must defend their unions against the union bashers, so must they defend the Soviet Union against this imperialist war drive (aimed at restoring capitalism). And just as the Soviet workers need to remove the privileged bureaucracy, so the reformist leadership of the trade unions must be replaced by a revolutionary leadership."

Such is the class-struggle program around which a principled opposition to the current reformist trade union leadership must be constructed. The apolitical "militants", Paget and Jolliffe, have shown that they have no answers. The lessons of the recent defeats must be learned if the union is to survive. Vote only for Ron Rees in the PKIU Fairfax chapel elections! Vote to get the union "off its knees"! ■

## More bull from Battler

It is said that the horned toad, when attacked, puffs itself up and distends its body in order to create an impression of largeness. The response of sections of the left to the recent "We Care" anti-union marches would indicate that the horned toad has its analogue in the political world too — in this case the puffed-up workerists of the International Socialists (IS).

The 28 March issue of the *Battler* carried a full-page glowing account of how the IS "fought the scab marches — and why". We are told how the Brisbane IS launched a "Trade Unions Defence Committee" to "confront the anti-strikers", and how the fear of violent street clashes "undoubtedly kept many people away from the scab march". In Sydney a "100-strong rally" was staged; in Melbourne, 200 turned out to drown out "the pro-scab speeches", causing "havoc" with the anti-strike mobilisations. And this, *Battler* claims, "in turn may explain why the Perth march attracted only a few hundred die-hard union-bashers". What's more "the presence of opposition in Sydney and Brisbane ... quite clearly scared sections of the ruling class".

Sounds great, huh? Leftists battling anti-union marchers in the streets, the bosses wetting their pants — revolution may be just around the corner. The problem is that it is just not true. In Sydney the rally had at most 30 people;

in Brisbane, the cops waded in, arrested a number of counterdemonstrators and beat them up; in Melbourne, the IS pulled off a "united front" — not with the 2100 wharfies who struck that day — but with sections of the Socialist Workers Party and Paul White (of Paul, Richard and Duggi — "Socialist Fight" — fame).

The IS counter-rallies, lacking any organised presence among the trade unions, were substitutionist adventures. In Sydney and Melbourne, rows of cops shielded them from the several times larger anti-union marches. As we said in our last issue, "the IS' rallies were at best a display of impotent moral outrage, and at worst a positively harmful display of weakness, which can only embolden the union bashers" (*Australasian Spartacist* no 83, April 1981). What was needed were mass mobilisations by the labour movement to stop the "We Care" marches from ever starting.

But fighting to mobilise the mass of organised workers is anathema to the IS, since that would interfere with its plans to be the faithful "left" tail of the reformist union misleaders. Incredibly, the *Battler* piece makes no criticism of these sellout bureaucrats for their failure to mobilise even one union to directly oppose the anti-union marches. The IS brags it is setting an example which many others will soon follow, but

mobilising the organised working class to defend the unions against rightist attacks is primarily a political struggle, waged in the unions, against the bureaucratic traitors and their policies. It is this the IS seeks to opportunistically avoid by bypassing the unions on occasions such as the anti-union marches.

The *Battler* also attacks the Communist Party for leafleting the Sydney march, which had Nazi Ross "the Skull" May at its head. But just sixteen months ago, when the Soviet Red Army went into Afghanistan to crush a reactionary Muslim-feudalist rebellion, the IS in Melbourne itself handed out leaflets to a right-wing rally which prominently featured Ross May. Challenged to defend this scandalous act at a recent forum at the University of New South Wales, IS leader Tom O'Lincoln could only bluster that the group couldn't tell the character of the demonstration!! Funny thing, though, "the Skull" could. He at least has the virtue of consistency: "Hate Russia" and "hate the unions" marches are of a piece, since both are aimed at gains of the working class.

Only those capable of defending the existing conquests of the working class will ever be able to achieve new gains. The IS refuses to defend the USSR and can't defend the trade unions. To their substitutionist bravado, empty crowing and anti-Sovietism, we counterpose the program of Trotskyism — a program to oust the reformist bureaucrats and replace them with a revolutionary leadership of the labour movement. ■

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# Smash Hamer's attacks!

# Victorian teachers must strike to win!

MELBOURNE, 25 April — Victorian teachers have been shafted in an egregious sellout by the leadership of the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association (VSTA). Members of the VSTA, already disillusioned with their right-wing ALP leadership, were outraged when a planned 3-day stoppage, which was voted overwhelmingly at a 1 April mass meeting, was called off only on the day before it was due to begin. Since then their anger has increased as more details filtered down to the branches. The VSTA Central Committee had, as "an act of good faith", offered the Department of Education a 6-point package of giveaways, including giving 24 hours notice before any local stopwork action, offering "negotiations" on forced transfers and conditions, a moratorium action on conditions until the end of term 1 and a "confidential" deal with Alan Hunt (Minister of Education) whose details were known only to the top bureaucrats of the VSTA and the 29 teachers charged at Kealba High School for participating in a half-day stopwork action.

On 16 April VSTA members learned that Hunt had accepted the "deal" and stopped proceedings against the charged teachers by agreeing to an indefinite adjournment of the hearing at the Teachers' Tribunal. But the charges have not been dropped and the way is still open for the government to proceed with them or do exactly the same thing at other schools. As it stands the Kealba teachers are still on the payroll but at the expense of abandoning the fight to enforce union conditions there and elsewhere. Further, the regulations introduced by the government at the end of last year empowering it to stand down or withhold the pay of any striking teacher still stand as a threat hanging over the head of any teachers taking action over conditions in their schools.

Called several weeks after the charges against Kealba teachers had been laid, the 1 April 2500-strong mass meeting was presented with two alternative action proposals — the bureaucrats' motion for a three-day strike, and a call for an indefinite strike, flying pickets and the election of a strike committee, moved by Tess Lee-Ack of the newly formed Teacher Solidarity (TS) group which is heavily backed by the International Socialists (IS). In fact the VSTA committee had received as many as eight indefinite strike motions, including one passed at Hadfield High School and the Northern Region of the VSTA calling for an indefinite strike of all three teacher unions, the setting up of picket lines to close down all schools in the state, the election of a strike committee and extending the

demands of the strike to include hiring of all unemployed teachers and the elimination of forced transfers and Limited Tenure Employment (LTE) (see *Australasian Spartacist* no 83, April 1981).

In response to the bureaucratic suppression of their motion, Hadfield militants distributed a leaflet at the meeting urging unionists to support their policy and signifying their intention to have it debated by moving an amendment to the TS motion, raising the demands that the TS deliberately didn't address. The opposition to the Hadfield amendment came not from the VSTA tops but from the TS, in the persons of Mark Matcott (who ironically seconded the Hadfield motion

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VSTA mass meeting, 1 April: Tess Lee-Ack (right) talks left; Greg Benfield (left) advances program to win.

at the Northern Region meeting only now to speak against it), and TS leader Gerry Beaton. Beaton's arguments were the very ones that the bureaucrats use time and time again to prevent militant action: "... we're in a situation where we can't afford to bring other issues in because of the fact that it gives the government an out ... it puts them in a situation where they can turn around to us and not give in on one of our demands and we're in a situation where our members are still going to be victimised". In other words, tone down your demands to what you think the Minister might grant.

The real basis of their opposition to the Hadfield motion was revealed at a TS meeting the week before when Beaton opposed the motion on the basis that "nobody would vote for this". In fact, while the Hadfield amendment caused some stir when it was read out, the militants who spoke to it were listened to intently and applauded as they left the platform, and about a hundred unionists voted for it, demonstrating that while to many it at first seemed "pie in the sky", it in fact addressed in a powerful way the critical situation of teachers. As Greg Benfield, moving the amendment on behalf of Hadfield put it:

"If we're going to take strike action, and I believe we must, to turn back the offensive which has been launched against us by the government then we'd better strike to win and we better strike to win something. We better strike to get things like the immediate hiring of unemployed teachers — that's a key demand. It's a key demand because at present staffing levels in schools are running down to

establishment. At our school, Hadfield High School, we can no longer enforce conditions in our school; we simply do not have enough staff. The same situation is occurring right across the state. It makes the VSTA's conditions policy a paper policy, impossible to enforce. We must get massive hiring of teachers so that we can enforce the VSTA's conditions policy and in fact drive it forward ..."

Ultimately the indefinite strike motion was defeated by about 2 to 1, with hundreds of teachers spontaneously walking out after the vote was taken, while the bureaucrats' motion passed overwhelmingly.

In opportunistically restricting the demands of the strike to the lifting of



While the present teacher union leadership is manifestly bankrupt teacher militants must have no illusions in TS. TS hopes to intersect the upsurge of militancy in the VSTA coming out of the betrayal by the leadership of 6 members victimised at Seaford-Carrum High School last year by cynically proposing more militant demands than the bureaucrats while being careful to avoid "alienating" the membership by "going too far". Indeed, the crowning glory of TS, the successful call for a Special General Meeting of the VSTA to discuss putting a log of claims to Hunt, is significant in that it does not address the most important aspect of the log of claims, namely how to win it. Unwilling to take a position from the outset for fear of being unable to win support, they liquidate the struggle to mobilise teachers around a fighting program preferring to propose whatever action they think the membership is ready for.

### Teach Hamer a Lesson!

Such opportunist manoeuvres are the stock-in-trade of all union bureaucrats, and these people are not qualitatively different to the present leadership, even if, for the moment, they tend to "talk left". Far from being a principled class-struggle opposition eager to win militants to their program, TS is mortally afraid of criticism. After losing at the mass meeting, TS moved to bureaucratically suppress political discussion of its program by "excluding all members of the Spartacist League from TS". So much for the announcement five minutes earlier by TS member Sue Scalise that "virtually anyone can join Teacher Solidarity". Anyone, presumably, except those who criticise these reformists — like the Hadfield High VSTA branch and the 100 unionists who voted for their amendment to the TS' inadequate strike motion. Rank-and-file groups devoid of programmatic coherence like Teacher Solidarity are hardly new. In fact it was just such a rank-and-file group known as Links, similar to TS even down to its sub-reformist program of "a more democratic VSTA" fighting to "defend public education", that spawned such well-known VSTA identities as Phil Noyce, editor of *VSTA News*.

Despite the negotiated settlement of the Kealba dispute, the problems faced by teachers are not going to go away. The way forward for teachers was shown in the Hadfield motion — for an indefinite strike uniting the three teacher unions in a determined struggle to eliminate the threat posed by the draconian standdown regulations and to defend union independence from the bosses' state by pulling all teacher union reps off the government's Tribunal — a body which recently fined 15 teachers \$100 each for following VSTA policy of giving non-graded assessments to their students. Above all, teachers must attack the root of their problems, namely the issue of staffing and teacher unemployment. All unemployed teachers must be hired immediately and full teacher training programs restored, both to protect already existing conditions and to extend them, reducing teaching loads and class sizes so as to provide a decent education for all. The Teacher Solidarity grouping has demonstrated in action that it can only be a roadblock to such a struggle. Teachers need a genuine class-struggle leadership committed to winning the fight against Hunt/Hamer's provocations. And that can only be one committed to a full program linking this struggle to the fight for a workers government to expropriate the capitalist class. ■

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**SPARTACIST**

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# Union tops' 35-hour week "campaign" stalled

## Jobs for all! No to productivity deal sellouts!

With 600,000 workers languishing on the dole, the ACTU's farcical non-campaign for a 35-hour week is a bitter insult to the working class. In its latest instalment, the ACTU abandoned even token industrial action in favour of "productivity bargaining", only to be slapped in the face by the Arbitration Commission. In two recent rulings, this bosses' institution for policing the unions ruled out productivity deals as a way of reducing the work week and granted the metal industry employers a guarantee on the 40-hour week for the next two years.

This latter decision is a direct challenge to the metal workers, who could easily turn it into a meaningless scrap of paper if mobilised in a serious struggle. All the ACTU has done, however, is to walk out of the hearings. Last year Arbitration head Sir John Moore threatened to stop wage indexation rises during the metal workers' "campaign" of monthly five-hour stoppages. The ACTU Executive responded by caving in to the blackmail and stabbing in the back even this token action. In the ensuing months the ACTU "took over" the campaign and reduced it to hot air before the same blackmailing Arbitration justices, while the AMWSU eventually "suspended" its action. Currently the only industrial action in progress is "one-day-a-fortnight" strikes in sections of the metal trades industry.

### No to productivity bargaining!

When Moore ruled that productivity bargaining was out on 8 April, it dashed the hopes of ACTU top Cliff Dolan and the rest of the bureaucracy which had been built up by a 24 March ruling to grant the 35-hour week at the Altona petrochemical industrial complex near Melbourne. This was to be the model of the shorter hours productivity deal. A month later workers at Fox Manufacturing in Sydney's Western Suburbs secured a shorter work week, again in return for increased productivity and reduced absenteeism.

Union leaders have rushed to claim "victory" at both Altona and Fox; on hearing of the Fox settlement, AMWSU assistant national secretary and Communist Party (CPA) leader Laurie Carmichael said he was "ecstatic". But productivity deals invariably mean an intensification of exploitation. A trade-off in which the reformist bureaucrats promise to discipline and speed up the

workforce in exchange for reduced hours not only is *not* a victory; it strikes a demoralising blow at the unions themselves.

Both Altona and Fox Manufacturing are cases in point. The Fox deal came after a year-long industrial battle which culminated in a 10-week lockout of some 160 workers from 6 February. On 23 April the company gave in, but the 35-hour week — in reality a 70-hour nine-day fortnight which gives the bosses the option of forced overtime every two weeks — is only to be phased in and is not to begin until 5 January 1982, ie two years after the dispute first began. Likewise at Altona — a complex of six petrochemical plants of different companies — the only reason there was any deal at all was because of the extended strike action over the past years. This featured a "sit-in" occupation of the Union Carbide plant there in late 1979 and an 18-week strike

Dockyards in Sydney, where the unions incredibly passed a motion to "improve productivity" by *speeding themselves up*, finishing a job "on schedule" as a method of preventing layoffs by attracting contracts. This is the example cited by the bosses' *Financial Review* in a 25 March editorial approving productivity deals like Altona. "It shows there is a new spirit around", it said. Right — the spirit of treachery. What good are shorter hours if they are gained only *on condition* of increasing the exploitation of the workers?

### For a sliding scale of hours!

Fraser is making a big fuss about the 35-hour week; it was differences in how to deal with the question which formed the immediate backdrop to Peacock's resignation as minister for Industrial Relations. But the noise is out of all proportion to the actual events.



Hawke, Dolan: much talk, little action on shorter work week.

by B F Goodrich workers late last year. The AMWSU tops in Victoria — chiefly the supposed "left-wing militants" and ex-CPA members John Halfpenny and Jim Roulston — made sure that these actions remained completely isolated.

Finally the commission sanctioned an agreement in which the union made concessions in work practices to increase "efficiency" which, according to management/union/commission calculations, reduce the "cost" of the 35-hour week in the complex (which employs 850 workers) to \$34,000, ie "0.18 percent of total wages paid to Altona employees" (*Financial Review*, 25 March). In other words, sweet nothing.

The Fraser government complained during the Altona hearings that the "bargain" means employees giving up bad working habits, such as double time tea-breaks or niggling demarcation practices". But that was why Moore liked the deal. "Improved industrial relations" count as "increases in productivity" and translated that means no-strike agreements of one sort or another. If "productivity" is to be increased at Altona and Fox, it is through speed-up and "industrial peace" — and that is what the union leadership has agreed to. To top it off, Moore set up a "monitoring committee" chaired by one of his people to ensure that the unions at Altona keep to the deal over the next 12 months.

What this sort of "productivity bargaining" means was illustrated sharply at the Garden Island Naval

The union tops aren't fighting and even the bosses can accept productivity deals *a la* Fox or Altona. The deputy national director of the Metal Trades Industry Association, Bert Evans, claimed that the Fox settlement "had not raised one eyebrow among the Association's members" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 April). A consulting firm even ran an ad in the *National Times* offering to work out for prospective clients whether they would gain or lose by adopting a 35-hour week. The fact is that the 35-hour week does not fundamentally threaten the ruling class, since it makes virtually no impact on the "reserve army of unemployed" which the capitalist system uses to keep wages down.

In contrast to Dolan & Co, who limit their "campaigns" to industries where the bosses can "afford" it, a class-struggle leadership of the unions would have been fighting to spread the Union Carbide sit-in and B F Goodrich dispute into mass factory occupations and nationwide strikes demanding a drastically reduced work week at no loss in pay. As Trotsky put it in 1938:

"The right to employment is the only serious right left to the worker in a society based on exploitation.... Against unemployment, 'structural' as well as 'conjunctural', the time is ripe to advance, along with the slogan of public works, the slogan of a sliding scale of hours.... On this basis all the work on hand would then be divided among all the existing workers in accordance with how the extent of the working week is defined. The average wage of every worker remains the same as

it was under the old working week. Wages, with a strictly guaranteed *minimum*, would follow the movement of prices."

— *Transitional Program*

Such demands would unite the unemployed and the trade unions in a struggle to halt the slashing of public service jobs and facilities by Fraser's "Razor Gang" and to beat back the employers' attempts to make the working class pay for capitalism's recurrent crises.

The trade union misleaders are quick to denounce such a program as "unrealistic" and equally quick to reassure the bourgeoisie that there is no "headlong rush" to win even the inadequate 35-hour week. "The ACTU and its affiliates are being most selective in relation to the 35-hour week and its application to certain sectors of industry", Cliff Dolan announced at a 31 March National Press Club luncheon (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 April). But as Trotsky again pointed out, "Realisability" or "unrealisability" is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle"; "the question is one of guarding the proletariat from decay, demoralization, and ruin" (op cit).

The bureaucrats' do-nothing "campaign" only weakens the fighting capacity of the working class. Yet they're now threatening to do even less. After Moore's repudiation of productivity bargaining, the AMWSU's Laurie Carmichael announced that the campaign "may get slower for a while" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 April). Slower! All Carmichael has pushed so far are impotent "guerrilla strikes" which demoralise the membership without winning anything. The end product was revealed in the recent Victorian AMWSU elections, where Roulston and Halfpenny barely squeaked in against an anti-communist opposition trading on pessimism among the union ranks.

The CPA, Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and International Socialists have appointed themselves cheerleaders for the bureaucracy's non-campaign, complete with nostalgic reminiscences to the struggle for the eight-hour day. The SWP even insisted that the Altona deal was a great victory; and although all of them have made tepid "criticisms" of productivity bargaining, that is where their own reformist perspective directly leads. Last year they were proclaiming that the 35-hour week was "practical" because the bosses could "afford" it. The translation of that into programmatic terms is Dolan's productivity deals: *make sure* the bosses can afford it by policing the workers to defend profits.

In the 19th century, capitalism's progressive epoch, the shorter working week was a gain extracted from the ruling class after a series of protracted struggles. In the epoch of imperialist decay, the capitalists can no longer grant such reforms: all they have to offer is periodic crises, spiralling inflation and rocketing unemployment. The working class today is confronted with the task of overthrowing this rotten system. To do that it needs a revolutionary leadership in place of the pro-capitalist bureaucrats — "left" and right — who meekly carry out the bosses' bidding. The reformists' "shorter hours" campaign means productivity bargaining; to that the Spartacist League counterposes the fight for a sliding scale of hours as part of the struggle for workers power. ■

Australasian Spartacist

### Spartacist Forum

## Lessons of the Russian Revolution:

Why today defence of Cuba, USSR begins in El Salvador

Speaker: James Shaughnessy, Central Committee, SL/ANZ

1pm, Wednesday 29 April  
Room G66,  
Morven Brown Building  
University of NSW

(for more information  
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# Ranks burn sellout contract Victory to the US coal miners' strike!

With the Fairfax and Murdoch press imposing a virtual blackout on the weeks-old US coal miners' strike, Australasian Spartacist is proud to be able to bring news to our readers of this militant struggle. The following article is based on firsthand reports by Mark Lance, who was recently on the spot in the Pennsylvania and West Virginia coalfields, covering the strike for Workers Vanguard, fortnightly paper of the Spartacist League/US. Lance was WV's reporter in the field during the Great Coal Strike of 1977-78.

UNIONTOWN, Pennsylvania — On March 31, by a crushing majority, the coal miners said, "Shove it!"

They said it to B R Brown of Consolidation Coal, top negotiator for the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA), who told miners they'd gain nothing by striking. They said it to union president Sam "I know my membership" Church, who boasted that his yellow dog deal would be ratified by 65 percent. And they said it to Ronald Reagan's anti-labour government, which gives the green light to skyrocketing oil prices with one hand while taking aim at black lung benefits with the other.

Standing once again in the forefront of the US working class, the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) is on strike. In order to win, the miners will need all the guts and determination with which they fought the Great Coal Strike of 1977-78, and above all a militant leadership with a class-struggle program to defeat the hardlining companies and their government! The UMWA membership must take control of their union and call upon the rest of organised labour to join this vital battle. In particular, they should appeal to railroad workers, whose contracts are now up, to stop the flow of coal and wage a powerful joint coal/rail strike which could break the bosses' front.

The "no" vote was 2 to 1 overall out of almost 100,000 votes, and the margin was even greater in the UMWA's traditionally most militant regions. Ohio miners rejected the proposal by almost 3 to 1. In the Pittsburgh-area District 5, it was more than 5 to 1. In southern West Virginia's District 17, the union's largest, the "no" vote was nearly 7 to 1. And in southwestern Pennsylvania's District 4, the rejection was higher still.

The contracts were burning well before the ballots were counted. At US Steel's Robena mine near Greensboro, Pennsylvania, where Church had come to greet the hoot-owl shift, one was set afire in the bathhouse just minutes after the old agreement expired. In Charleston, after a heated hour-and-a-half discussion on the first article, not one official had spoken in favour of the

agreement. Many walked out. Finally a miner asked if any of the District 17 officials would vote for the contract. No one, not even district president Jack Perry, who sat at the bargaining table, dared to raise his hand. With that the crowd started throwing their copies at the stage. "The sky was full of contracts", one miner told WV. Bundles of contracts went into the bonfire. The same scenes were repeated countless times across the coal fields the next day as angry rank and filers voted with their matchbooks.

## Sellout means non-union mines

The UMWA ranks overwhelmingly rejected Church's contract because it threatens the viability of the union. Opening wide the portals to non-union coal production could destroy the UMWA. At first the news media praised Sellout Sam's deal as a "victory" for the union. Now they discover that miners object to surrendering royalties paid to the union's pension fund for the processing of non-BCOA-signatory coal. In addition to allowing the BCOA to bankrupt the retirement funds, Church made concessions which would have allowed the bosses to open their own non-union mines, sublease their properties to non-union companies, subcontract construction work in and around the mines to non-union firms, and buy unlimited amounts of non-union coal for processing through union tipples without any royalty payment to the union.

On wages, the companies were trying to buy miners' votes with a pact that might keep pace with inflation, since union strength would be gutted through the vicious takeaway clauses. What's more, while Church boasted that he had "won" the "abolition" of the hated Arbitration Review Board, a loophole provides that all prior decisions "shall continue to have precedential effect". And a "memorandum of understanding" called for a "study committee" to consider the "desirability of some type of review mechanism" — in other words a new ARB. On top of all this, Church conceded a first-ever 45-day probation period for new hires. This would have allowed the companies to weed out pro-union workers and would have exposed inexperienced workers to underground dangers with no union protection, while the union treasury would collect initiation fees and dues. This arrangement would hardly build UMWA loyalty among new hires — especially if they're laid off or fired before 45 days.

In rejecting this miserable contract, the UMWA ranks are facing a very tough strike. The BCOA and its customers have 20 million tons of coal on the ground — much of it already at the burning site — enough to last well into the summer. And

US miners burn sellout contract. Joint coal/rail strike can smash bosses'/Reagan's union-busting offensive.



Workers Vanguard

BCOA negotiator Brown, who "has no plans to resume negotiations" (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 2 April), made it crystal clear what his intentions are. The miners' vote, Brown said, "reflects a disturbing lack of bargaining discipline in the UMWA which puts the integrity of the bargaining process in serious jeopardy". With Reagan's labour-hating administration in office, the coal operators are threatening to break the back of the oldest and most combative industrial union in the US. A lot is riding on the outcome of this strike, and not just for the UMWA. Defeat for the miners would open the door to an even bigger anti-union offensive across the US. So it's strike to win big, or else!

The experience of the bitter 110-day strike of 1977-78 is still fresh in the minds of UMWA members, but with the BCOA going after the lifeblood of their union the miners are not ones to run from a fight. On March 24 Kentucky state police arrested eight men after a convoy of coal trucks was allegedly fired upon. A week later, 200 pickets descended upon a Mingo County mine in West Virginia; scabs' cars were reportedly stoned. Later that night an eastern Kentucky foreman's car was riddled with bullets as it crossed a picket line. On April 1 roving pickets shut down a scab mine in Norton, Virginia and three others were closed in West Virginia's Preston County. Police complained that strikers were "slipping back and forth" between Kentucky and West Virginia, making short, surprise stops at scab mines on both sides of the line. But such isolated guerrilla actions, though a necessary part of harassing the enemy, will not win the war for the UMWA.

## For a joint coal/rail strike!

As in the 1977-78 strike, the key to victory is in stopping the movement and burning of coal. Given the large stockpiles, the UMWA must call on the rest of labour to hot cargo [black ban] all coal! The bosses are no doubt counting on getting coal from the non-union Western mines, as well as from various Eastern stockpiles, but this coal moves largely by railroad and can be stopped.

By coincidence, several railway unions, such as the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks (BRAC) and others, are negotiating new contracts for 500,000 rail workers in April. A joint strike of coal and railway workers, each pledged not to go back until both are satisfied, could quickly bring the bosses to their knees and win what miners need — including restoration of "cradle-to-grave" medical coverage, fully funded pension coverage, a big wage boost with

100 percent COLA [cost-of-living-allowance], unlimited right to strike, etc.

Joint union action is the way to win — but the companies know that too, so of course the capitalist government is prepared to step in with all kinds of anti-union laws. Reagan may attempt to use the Taft-Hartley law against the strikes just as Carter and the Democratic Party did in 1977-78. And rail unions have for decades been hamstrung by the Railway Labor Act of 1926, which puts all kinds of legal barriers in the way of strikes. A solid coal/rail strike could abolish these anti-strike laws for good!

Joint strike action is not far-fetched, either — in 1978 there was widespread sympathy among workers for the miners in the battle against the Taft-Hartley law. In the West Coast International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), a class-struggle opposition group, the Militant Caucus, got an enthusiastic response to their call for "hot cargoing" coal. The do-nothing ILWU leadership even felt obliged to pass a motion for a 24-hour solidarity strike, and only last-minute stalling by the International (plus opposition from supporters of the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party) managed to head off actual strike action. Similar fights by union militants for solidarity action took place in the Steelworkers, the National Maritime Union and many other unions across the country. The coal miners need not — and must not — stand alone!

International labour solidarity was also present in 1978. In Australia, the Spartacist League initiated rallies outside the US consulates in Sydney and Melbourne, calling for victory to the miners' strike and opposing Carter's use of the strikebreaking Taft-Hartley Act. In addition, the waterfront group of unions in Newcastle voted to place a complete ban on all coal shipments leaving the town during the strike. Militant solidarity action of this sort is again called for to help the miners win their current struggle.

## A strike with an anti-strike leadership?

"I don't like it any more than you do, brothers", UMWA president Church told a miners' rally in Beckley, West Virginia, moaning that he "had to accept" the takeaways because of a recent Supreme Court ruling against union restrictions on subcontracting. "We have to take it because the courts say it's the law". A miner snapped back, "Strike the Supreme Court"! Miners know better than Church: you can't mine coal with bayonets! Let Taft and Hartley mine the coal!

The real danger to this strike is at the

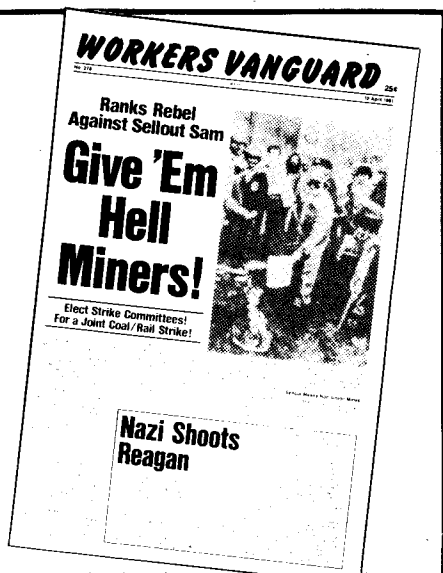
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For on-the-scene reports from the US coal miners' strike, as well as major articles on the key political questions internationally, subscribe to Workers Vanguard, Marxist fortnightly of the Spartacist League/US.

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## Interview with ex-Peace Corps teacher

# Eyewitness to betrayal in El Salvador

The following interview with Tom Janota, the last US Peace Corps volunteer to leave El Salvador, was conducted by Workers Vanguard, fortnightly paper of the Spartacist League/US. Janota left El Salvador in mid-1980 to return to Madison, Wisconsin, where he became a spokesman for Community Action on Latin America (CALA). At a 22 January rally on El Salvador, Janota gave a speech warning against the class-collaborationist policy of popular-frontism. The Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR), he pointed out, is led by bourgeois politicians like Guillermo Ungo, who only months ago was a member of the murderous junta. "We must not forget that these people also have the workers' blood on their hands", Janota declared. After the meeting, a member of the Committee in Solidarity with the

People of El Salvador (CISPES) attacked Janota on the grounds that he had "smeared the leader of the FDR. I asked him, 'How do you think Ungo could escape blame or escape responsibility for what happened during his own stay in office?'" (Young Spartacus no 90, April 1981). Subsequently CALA, which works exclusively through CISPES, expelled Janota for endorsing and speaking at a successful, 400-strong rally initiated by the Spartacus Youth League on 4 February. The interview is abridged from Workers Vanguard no 278, 10 April 1981.

★ ★ ★

**WV:** First of all, why don't you tell us why you were in El Salvador?

**Janota:** I was in El Salvador as a Peace Corps volunteer teaching high school

ecology in the western part of the country, in a town called Ahuachapan, and working with the Ministry of Education developing curriculum materials in ecology. I started in 1978, and I was working at this school until the Peace Corps was pulled out in February 1980. I stayed in the country even after the Peace Corps left. Really, in February still there was doubt as to which way all of these events were going to go. For instance, the agrarian reform had not been called yet until March. So I was just very interested to see how things would develop and stayed on until late May.

**WV:** Could you tell us about what you saw of the repression in El Salvador?

**Janota:** The repression is a daily occurrence in El Salvador....

I would hear stories of night raids. The raids during the day, at least there's more witnesses around, they tend to be milder in comparison to the night raids, where there would be a knock at your door and you would be dragged out because you had been involved with a student group or had been involved with a union or a peasant association. You would be pulled out, shot on the spot, or maybe you would be pulled out and brought to police headquarters and tortured and then shot. You have cases of a teacher being decapitated and his head rolled into the classroom as a warning to the students that there will be no questioning of the government line, no subversive activities in this school. This really barbaric kind of activity is designed to terrorize the people so that even though they may not agree they're

## June 13 "day of action" on El Salvador

# For an anti-imperialist contingent!

A bloody civil war is raging in El Salvador. Nicaragua is threatened with counterrevolutionary invasion. Cuba is threatened with blockade and worse. Reagan has proclaimed Central America the front line of his anti-Soviet Cold War. The question is: *which side are you on?*

Reagan, Haig and Fraser have a side. While Fraser cheers, rapidly accelerating shipments of US arms, Green Berets and over \$126 million in economic aid has been propping up the murderous junta and its death squads who slaughtered more than 12,000 last year alone. We have a side too — backing the struggle of workers and peasants against their oppressors. We want the leftist insurgents to *win* the civil war, to *defeat* the military junta and its imperialist god-fathers! However, seeking to curry favour with imperialist liberals, the reformist organisers of El Salvador protests *refuse to side with the Salvadoran rebels.*

The Committee in Solidarity with Central America and the Caribbean (CISCAC), which is backed by the pro-Moscow Socialist Party (SPA) and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), is organising June 13 "Day of Solidarity" protests in deliberate opposition to calls for military victory to the Salvadoran leftists. A full-page CISCAC ad in the *National Times* (modelled on one their American brethren placed in the *New York Times* in February) pushes the slogan: "Let the people of El Salvador decide their own future". Just as in the US they appeal to liberal imperialists like Teddy Kennedy to stop "our involvement" in another losing war like Vietnam, so here they pursue the likes of Don Chipp and the editors of the *Age*. Fraser has "hastily committed his government to an uncritical support of US Aid to the junta", they say. "Peace will only come to this troubled nation by the Salvadorans settling their own problems."

In 1932 the 14 Families settled their "own problems" and brought "peace" to El Salvador by massacring over 30,000 workers and peasants! It is not enough to demand no American intervention. Self-determination, the liberals' slogan, is not the issue. The issue is whether the Salvadoran workers and peasants will wipe out this murderous,

imperialist-backed tyranny for good and set all of Central America aflame with proletarian revolution. The Spartacist League is calling for an *anti-imperialist contingent* in the Sydney and Melbourne marches on June 13 to demand:

- Down with the junta! For military victory to the leftist insurgents!
- US/OAS hands off Central America!
- End all US aid to the El Salvadoran junta!
- Defence of Cuba, USSR begins in El Salvador!

The fundamental political counter-position between those who want to *pressure* imperialism and those who fight to *defeat* it was clear in the 500-strong Melbourne El Salvador march of April 3. The Spartacist League (SL) contingent of over 20 stood out sharply against the predominant church, pacifist do-goodism as the *only* anti-imperialist pole, marching under the slogans: "Down with the bloody junta! For workers revolution!" and "Military Aid to leftist insurgents!"

On the CISCAC-organised platform a Catholic priest and Dick Wootten of the Uniting Church were joined by the ALP Socialist Left's Brian Howe, who called for building support for the class-collaborationist Salvadoran opposition coalition, the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR), in the unions and... the churches. For CISCAC the SWP's Renfrey Clarke was likewise uncritical of the FDR. SWPers refused to allow a speaker from the SL to call for military victory until they finally abandoned the mike at the end of the pre-march rally.

But during the march our chants of "Smash Reagan's Cold War, US out of El Salvador", "No more Chiles! The popular front means workers blood! For workers revolution in El Salvador!" and "One, two, three, four, Reagan wants a third world war. Five, six, seven, eight, Defend Cuban and Soviet workers states!" rang out as the SWP chanted the slogan of the popular front: "Freedom for El Salvador". And afterwards over 100 stayed to listen as SL speakers called for the Salvadoran masses to break from the bourgeoisie, demanded Cuban and Soviet aid for the insurgents, and opposed the FDR's treacherous call for negotiations.



Melbourne, 3 April: SL contingent alone raised anti-imperialist program.

In their search for a bloc with the liberal bourgeoisie the SWP is driven to try to silence the anti-imperialist call for military victory at all costs. In the US, their co-thinkers have mobilised large goon squads to physically exclude Spartacist supporters from the counter-part of CISCAC, and on one occasion actively tried to sabotage an SL-sponsored demonstration in Los Angeles to defend Salvadoran refugees against deportation into the hands of the junta killers by the US government. When the Sydney CISCAC called a publicly-advertised meeting to discuss June 13 at the Trade Union Club on 22 April, SWP honcho Ron Poulsen and two fellow SWPers tried to physically bar the door to Spartacist supporters. Our comrades insisted, however, that the public meeting be run democratically and took their places inside. The orderly meeting put paid to the SWP's lies about "disruption".

When an SL supporter put the four demands listed above on the floor in the form of a motion on the slogans for June 13, one member of the audience couldn't see why "these demands are so sectarian" as the SWP claimed. Poulsen, however, leapt to the defence of the

popular-frontist FDR. "Unlike the SL I don't believe that the bourgeoisie is the most immediate threat in El Salvador but US imperialism is", he said, claiming that the junta was so isolated it would fall automatically if the US withdrew support. "I agree with what Ron said about internal dynamics", chimed in a supporter of the International Socialists (IS), who also explained his group was there to oppose "imperialism East and West".

At a CISCAC meeting in Melbourne the following Saturday, an SL supporter pinpointed the source of the "explicit agnosticism of 'Let the people decide'": a fear of "alienating those who oppose military victory, like the Don Chippis". He put forward the four demands advanced at the Sydney meeting as the only basis for anti-imperialist action on El Salvador in counterposition to CISCAC class collaboration: the choice was "either pacifist, classless, agnostic 'concern'... or militant anti-imperialist solidarity which stands with the masses and not the bourgeois politicians that want to preserve the imperialist status quo".

This class axis succeeded in polarising the IS representative present, Tom

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going to think twice about getting involved with these left groups.

They mean to literally decapitate, or certainly figuratively to wipe out whatever currents of protest are existing, more or less as they did in 1932 where there was an uprising of the Indians led by the Communists. During the uprising itself there were casualties on the government side of maybe a hundred, stretching it — not even that many, probably. Maybe a thousand Indians were killed during the uprising itself. In the aftermath there was a bloodbath of some 30,000 Indians killed and again strictly the Indians and strictly the males who the government felt were not to be trusted. They were "subversive" because they wanted to have their land back, for themselves and for the children. So the government already has that history of being willing to deal quite barbarically with whatever opposition arises, and I think that's what's happening now in El Salvador. They're not going to stop at 12,000 dead but will kill as many people as is necessary in their eyes. This time you can expect that to go into the hundreds of thousands.

**WV:** Okay, so let's turn to the political side of it. You've said that reading Spartacist literature brought the lessons of popular frontism home to you — Chile, Spain, and so on. Could you tell us some about the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) in El Salvador and how it came about? We know that the original leader of the FDR, Enrique Alvarez Cordova, of the 14 Families and the present leader, Guillermo Ungo, who is a vice president of the Socialist International, were members of what was called the "reform junta" installed by Carter in October 1979. And Ungo was also the running mate of Napoleon Duarte in 1972. What else can you tell us about the Social Democrats and Christian Democrats in that period?

**Janota:** Surely. Well, after the coup on October 15, 1979, there was an initial euphoria because General Romero had been a hated figure among the masses, and even among some of the bourgeois politicians. There was great hope that there were finally going to be some changes made. And it was with that enthusiasm that the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats and even members of the Communist Party entered the first cabinet of this popular-front coalition that was being formed. It included members of the left wing, also including some of the more "moderate" and even some fairly reactionary forces that had been associated with past military governments.

**WV:** Wasn't there a Communist Party minister of labor?

**Janota:** Yes, I believe a Sr Gallegos, if I'm not mistaken. So there was this broad coalition of left to "moderate" groups. The problem was, though, that the power in this new government was really residing in the Ministry of Defense, with Colonel Jose Garcia. And that was evident very quickly, as the security forces increased their repression after the coup, while on one side the government would be making promises for land reform and dialogue with the popular groups and looking into the matter of the *desaparecidos*, people who had disappeared — there were hundreds of these people, who had been arrested by the Romero government and were never heard from again. There were promises to investigate all of these things and to basically establish a new



Junta troops round up victims. Only military victory of leftist insurgents will end bloodbath.

government and a new dialogue with the people. While those promises were being made, union people were being targeted for assassination, and also teachers, students, peasant leaders and so forth.

The Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats in the cabinet evidently were becoming a little bit impatient. At the same time that they wanted to make some changes, they found themselves on all sides being subverted by members of their own government. And then, of course, you have the whole question of promising reforms while the police forces, this many-tiered security apparatus, was going about systematically hunting down leaders of mass organizations for assassination. So it was a tremendously contradictory period from October '79 until January 1980, when there was finally a mass ultimatum from the cabinet either to bring the security forces under control or they would resign.

Initially, at least, right after the coup in October, there was a truce declared by most of the left-wing groups, saying they were going to wait and see, and there was going to be hope that this new arrangement would be successful.

**WV:** That's when they initiated the "reform by death", the so-called land reform?

**Janota:** Actually, that really started in October, but it accelerated markedly in March. Originally what happened was 500 of the largest estates in the country were occupied by the army. Under the reform program all estates over 12,050 acres were to be expropriated, and split up among the farm workers living on that estate. Cooperatives were to be formed then from the peasants living on the estates, and then these leaders would organize and it would become a more or less independent body. What happened at the same time, though, was the militarization of the countryside because the day after the agrarian reform was called, a state of siege was declared giving the military broad powers to intervene, basically at will. So this was a way to have a military presence in the countryside keeping a closer check on the peasant organizations that had been growing and had been causing problems in the countryside by their organizational activities.

Something else interesting was happening along with this reform, the subversion of the very government cooperatives that were being formed. Often times these very cooperative leaders would be the targets of assassination of either of the security forces. I've heard stories of security forces actually coming into the estate, a hacienda, and asking a peasant who are

your leaders. And the leaders would come forward and they would be hauled off and shot or shot right on the spot. Sometimes it was the uniformed security forces themselves. Other times it would be the right-wing paramilitary troop called ORDEN meaning order in Spanish.

In many cases the security forces would just take off their uniforms and would be basically moonlighting as ORDEN members. So there's a very close working between this right-wing group ORDEN and the military. You hear so many times of how the army is trying to combat both the right and the left, but somehow I've never heard or never read in all my time in El Salvador of any case where an ORDEN member had been arrested let alone killed by the security forces. Basically ORDEN was allowed to operate freely throughout the countryside, and was widely feared. They could be in every small village and town, and they are the information-gathering organ of this old repressive machine that you have in El Salvador right now.

**WV:** What was the attitude of what you would call far left towards reform?

**Janota:** Well, I'm talking again now about the groups that are more avowedly Marxist.

**WV:** Left of the CP.

**Janota:** Right. For instance the BPR, the People's Revolutionary Block, was the only far left group that was suspicious from the beginning about the government's intentions. So their tactic was to put pressure on the government to make the changes it was promising. And its tactic was to occupy buildings. For example, right after the coup, on October 24, members of the BPR occupied the ministry of economy and labor demanding wage increases for farm workers and factory workers, demanding the lowering of prices of basic goods and so forth. So the BPR tactic was to keep up pressure on the junta to make good on its promises basically.

Other left groups were, let's say, more innocent or something. For instance the ERP, the People's Revolutionary Army, declared a truce shortly after. Interestingly, the ERP and the FPL (the Popular Front for Liberation) both were involved in the uprisings in the working-class suburbs on the 15th of October, which were bloodily put down, as I talked about before. About two or three days after that, they declared a truce. The ERP said, maybe they do mean what they say, maybe changes will be made, and maybe there are some good people in the cabinet. So they said we're going to wait and see, and for the moment we're going

to suspend military activities against the government.

So there was one line saying, well, we should wait and see, maybe there will be some changes, and then there were the skeptics, like the BPR, that didn't really believe the promises, but were willing to play along, basically, at the same time trying to keep up some pressure tactics. The truce broke down — it was becoming evident, as I was saying, in October already, as demonstrations were massacred again. There was a FAPU demonstration, for example, in the working-class suburb Soyapango on October 22, that was ambushed and the marchers were shot.

So the far left began to realize that things had not changed, that reform was coming out of one side of the government's mouth and on the other side were orders for persecution of anyone opposed to the government. By December of '79 the left was ending the truce as it was becoming clear to most people that there had just been a change of colonels, a change of military men, but not a change in program. And on January 2nd, the cabinet resigned in protest at the repression that had continued to go on in the countryside, saying at the same time that they were still hopeful that some kind of civilian/military coalition might be formed and might make the necessary changes.

The far left groups, by this time, had decided there isn't going to be any civilian/military coalition that's going to make any change here, and so they began to hold talks to form some kind of federation. These groups were the BPR again, the UDN (a socialist party, I think they had broken off from the CP earlier and were really a more radical party than the Communist Party), FAPU (which is a coalition of student and union groups), the LP-28 (that's the Popular Leagues of February 28th, which is a group formed pretty much from dissident Christian Democrats, formed in 1977). These groups, the BPR, the UDN, FAPU and LP-28, decided to make a coalition and for the inauguration of their Revolutionary Coordinating Committee of the Masses, or *Coordinadora Revolucionaria de Masas*, as it was called, they decided to hold a demonstration on the 22nd of January 1980. This was the 48th anniversary of the Communist-led uprising in 1932.

It was an incredible demonstration. There were upwards of 200,000 — there were so many people it was hard even to estimate the numbers. The march stretched 70 blocks long, from the western edge of the city all of the way into

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# Poland...

Continued from page one

it could quickly grow and have a tremendous polarizing impact. Should the Kremlin, goaded by imperialist provocation, move to restore bureaucratic order in Poland, however, it would in the best case freeze that political differentiation necessary for the only progressive solution to the Polish crisis: workers political revolution. Thus genuine proletarian internationalists must bitterly protest a Russian military intervention, which would represent a *defeat* for the cause of socialism.

But far worse would be violent resistance by the Poles, which could produce a bloodbath. This would be a historic catastrophe. A "cold" suppression would only postpone the confrontation between the Polish workers and their Stalinist rulers. If there is a Soviet tank on every street corner and the Polish people walk by them hissing, what has really changed? But if there is a violent response, the resulting repression would crush the Polish working class into the ground politically and produce an explosion of anti-Russian nationalism that would take years, perhaps decades to overcome. It would also fuel US imperialism's war drive to a white heat, which is why Reagan and Haig are pushing for such a bloodbath. *Proletarian revolutionaries must therefore emphatically oppose all violent resistance, whether mass action or individual terror, against such a Soviet military intervention in Poland.*

The present Polish situation is the product of decades of capitulation by the Stalinist bureaucrats to capitalist forces. It makes revolutionaries yearn for a Trotskyist leadership in the USSR which would make short shrift of the Polish crisis. Only a political revolution throughout Stalinist-ruled East Europe can open the road to socialism. And that requires internationalist Trotskyist parties which can reach out to the Soviet working class in defending the gains of the October Revolution.

## Stalinism fuels clerical-nationalist reaction

The Soviet armed forces entering German-occupied Poland in 1944 were greeted as liberators in a social as well as a national sense. The expropriation of the large landed estates and big capitalists in the mid/late-1940s was a broadly supported measure. Yet three decades of Stalinist bureaucratic rule have turned much of the population, and much of the industrial working class, against what they view as the "Russian-imposed Communist system". And this is not simply a reaction to the police suppression of democratic rights and the gross privileges and corruption of the "socialist" officialdom. The present Polish crisis, especially the dangerous growth of clerical-nationalist sentiment, has its roots in the failures and broken promises of *reform* Stalinism.

When Wladyslaw Gomulka came to power in 1956 proclaiming the need for the widest workers democracy, he enjoyed enormous popular authority. Then he turned and suppressed the workers councils and dissident intellectual circles which had supported him against the hard-line Stalinists. When Edward Gierk replaced Gomulka in 1970 after the Baltic coast workers' uprising, many believed his promises of unparalleled economic prosperity. Then he ruinously mortgaged Poland's wealth to Western bankers and also ruinously subsidized the landowning peasants!

So when under the pressure of rising prices and food and other consumer goods shortages the workers exploded last summer, they looked to the powerful Catholic church as the recognized opposition to the discredited Communist regime. The *Internationale* was replaced by the national hymn, "Oh God, Who Has Defended Poland", and the new workers' leader, Lech Walesa, declared himself at every opportunity to be a true son of the Polish church. Many of the "dissidents" who raised their heads are

openly reactionary — virulently nationalist, anti-communist, anti-democratic and even anti-Semitic (despite the fact that there are almost no Jews left in Poland).

The upsurge of clerical nationalism is associated with pro-Western sympathies, often expressed in calls for "free trade unions" like in the US and West Germany. Polish workers would do well to look at the blood-soaked American neo-colonies before buying the Radio Free Europe line. The Russians would have to kill something like 150,000 Poles to proportionately match the number of workers and peasants slaughtered during the last year by Carter/Reagan's junta in El Salvador. In Brazil, the popular union leader "Lula" has been sentenced to three and a half years in prison for far less than threatening to lead a political general strike every month or so. Even United Auto Workers observer John Christensen commented:



Polish police patrol Bydgoszcz after beating of Solidarity representatives.

"It's incredible to me that in comparing Brazil and Poland, a Communist country, there seems to be more freedom there than here. Walesa is freer than Lula. There the Government agreed to hold a dialogue with him, not here."

— *New York Times*, 3 April

A visit to El Salvador and Brazil by a "Solidarity" delegation might teach them a thing or two about the "free world" — if they got out alive.

With the strong clerical-nationalist influence over the new unions which became *Solidarnosc*, we have repeatedly warned of the danger of capitalist counterrevolution spearheaded by Pope Wojtyla's church. At the same time, we recognized that the emergence of a powerful workers movement fundamentally challenging Stalinist bureaucratic rule could also open the road to proletarian political revolution. We have therefore insisted that the key strategic task for a Trotskyist vanguard in Poland was to *split* the mass of workers from reactionary forces. This means fighting for a series of programmatic demands including strict separation of church and state, defense of collectivized property, defense of the Soviet bloc degenerated/deformed workers states against imperialism. A Trotskyist vanguard would seek to polarize the workers movement, attracting those who seek a genuinely socialist solution and are hostile to the Vatican and Western capitalism.

## Solidarnosc in turmoil, Communist Party polarised

Today we see the beginnings of internal political differentiation within "Solidarity" and the Communist party. For the first time forces are opposing bureaucratic rule not in the name of the eagle and the cross but calling for "socialist renewal" and even a return to the principles of "Marxism-Leninism". The *New York Times* (12 April) now projects, "Barring Soviet military intervention, the likely next phase in the workers' revolution in Poland will not be a struggle against the Communist Party but a struggle within the party itself." This makes even more urgent the crystallization of a Trotskyist propaganda nucleus in Poland which alone can offer a *way out* of the desperate and seemingly endless crises which are wracking Poland.

The political landscape has changed considerably since the Gdansk-based general strike last summer. Walesa is

under several-sided attack from within *Solidarnosc*. Meanwhile, many of the more than one million working-class members of the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP) now participating in "Solidarity" must find their socialist convictions (however deformed by Stalinist ideology) in conflict with the reactionary views of Walesa and his associates. The church hierarchy, on the other hand, has pulled back, fearing a Soviet military intervention. A few days before "Solidarity" had scheduled a general strike at the end of March, Cardinal Wyszynski issued a joint statement with Prime Minister Wojciech Jaruzelski urging that "strikes can be eliminated as extremely costly to the enfeebled national economy" (*Daily World*, 28 March).

Most striking is the impact which the workers struggles have had on the Stalinist apparatus of the PUWP. The

recent Central Committee meeting at the end of March turned into a political brawl. "We must know that Solidarity is in the first place the working class itself", declared the party secretary of the Baltic port of Szczecin. Only the fear of the Kremlin's reaction prevented this meeting from throwing hardliners like Stefan Olszowski off the Politburo. A recent national conference in Torun of dissident groupings within the party called for full and adequate information, secret ballots, multiple candidates. One delegate protested: "The authorities should not present the changes going on in our country as the work of antisocialist forces but as a proper restoration of Marxist-Leninist principles" (*New York Times*, 16 April).

However, overall the PUWP dissidents are *not* moving toward a rediscovery of authentic Leninism. They tend rather toward liberal Stalinism, "socialism with a human face", as the Czech Stalinist reformer Dubcek called it during the Prague Spring of 1968, and they seek a favorable hearing from the present

leaders of *Solidarnosc*. Moreover, they are quoted expressing anti-Russian prejudices and political sentiments common in Poland today. One delegate at the Torun conference remarked: "Our Soviet friends have a history that has accustomed them to absolutism in government. But the history of our nation is closely connected to democracy". And what of the national hero and fascistic dictator Pilsudski, a former right-wing social democrat who defended Polish capitalism against the Red Army in 1920?! As Trotsky pointed out, the Stalinist bureaucracy itself could generate a fascistic wing — he called it the "Butenko faction" — which in Poland today would be imbued with virulent anti-Russian nationalism.

If the PUWP liberals are talking of a "socialist renewal" in Poland, the Kremlin is warning of "creeping counter-revolution". The Brezhnevite Stalinists dare not attack the real basis for counter-revolution, the powerful Catholic hierarchy, but instead target relatively small dissident groups, notably Jacek Kuron's Committee for Social Self-Defense (KOR) and the Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN) of Leszek Moczulski. Of course, the Kremlin hacks would denounce *any* political opposition, including and especially Trotskyists, as "counter-revolutionary" and even "fascistic". But Stalinist slanders notwithstanding, KOR and the KPN are each in their own ways enemies of socialism.

The KPN is openly clerical-nationalist and anti-socialist. This is not the case, however, with Kuron's KOR. In the West Kuron is widely regarded as some kind of left radical, even a "Marxist" — a reflection of his stance in the 1960s. As we have pointed out in the face of his pseudo-Trotskyist cheerleaders, he has since moved far to the right. Tamara Deutscher confirms this in an important recent article in *New Left Review* ("Poland — Hopes and Fears", January-February, 1981). She recalls that when sentenced to prison in 1964, "Kuron and his comrade defiantly sang the Internationale in court. Such a gesture on his part would be unthinkable today. He has moved towards social democracy, the Church and a nationalistic position."

## Above all, a revolutionary internationalist party

Whether or not Moscow intervenes militarily in the near future, the Polish crisis is fast heading toward the explosion point. The economic chaos is assuming disastrous proportions. Food supplies are shrinking rapidly; hard currency exports have fallen 25 percent since last year, coal exports have dropped 50 percent. Politically the situation is anarchic. There must be a tremendous felt need for the working people of Poland to take control

## Felix Dzerzhinski (1877-1926)



Polish revolutionary communist and first head of the Russian Bolshevik Cheka. In 1921 he wrote: "I was the avowed enemy of nationalism and held that the Lithuanian Social-Democrats had committed a deadly sin when in 1898 ... they failed to join forces with the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party". When the Soviet Red Army drove back the invading Polish army of Pilsudski in 1920 and advanced on Warsaw, he became a member of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee in Bialystok. In a 25 August, 1920 letter to Z Z Dzerzhinska he wrote, "The [Red Army] soldiers knew that they were fighting only against the gentry, that they had come not to conquer Poland but to liberate it". Today when the Red Army is run in the interests of the Stalinist bureaucracy, not proletarian internationalism, Polish/Soviet working-class unity remains key. For workers political revolution in Poland, USSR! Defend the Soviet bloc against imperialism!



of society, of the economy, and direct it in their interests. Seeking to placate the masses, the Stalinist leaders are now talking about granting more powers to the parliament, the *Sejm*, nominally the highest governing body.

In Poland today the classic Bolshevik demand — *all power to the soviets*, the democratically elected workers councils — would have a broad appeal. A revolutionary vanguard might well demand that the supposed powers of the *Sejm* be vested in a congress of soviets as in the Russian October Revolution. But soviets in themselves do not guarantee the socialist direction of society. Especially under present Polish conditions, they could fall under the influence of reactionary nationalist forces seeking imperialist backing against the USSR. The crucial element is an authentically revolutionary workers party capable of organizing the socialist impulses among the working masses around a Marxist, *internationalist* program.

A communist vanguard must be militantly *anti-nationalist*. It would look back to the tradition of the pre-World War I socialist party of Rosa Luxemburg and Leo Jogiches. In contrast to Pilsudski's chauvinist Polish Socialist Party, they called their organisation the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania. They maintained that the socialist transformation of Poland was inextricably bound up with the proletarian revolution in Russia.

One of the leaders of the Luxemburg/Jogiches SDKPIL was Felix Dzerzhinski, who later played a distinguished role in the Bolshevik Revolution as head of the Cheka, the police arm of the early Soviet power. Dzerzhinski, whose Polish accent in Russian became stronger when he was agitated, was chosen for this most sensitive post because he was a revolutionist of outstanding moral integrity. On a far lesser historic scale, there was Konstanti Rokossovski, a young Polish socialist who joined the Soviet Red Army in 1919. Imprisoned in the Stalin purges of the late 1930s, he reemerged to become one of the greatest Soviet commanders of World War II. Marshal Rokossovski was not a revolutionist but a Stalinist military officer. But his service in defending the Soviet Union against imperialist attack does him honor — and he played a key role in liberating Poland in 1944-45 from nightmarish Nazi occupation.

In his great essay on "The Tragedy of the Polish Communist Party", Isaac Deutscher stressed as his main conclusion: "... if the history of the Polish CP and of Poland at large proves any-



Wałęsa negotiates with Polish deputy PM Jagielski (right), but paper agreement cannot last.

thing at all, it proves how indestructible is the link between the Polish and the Russian revolutions". Today it is necessary to revive the traditional revolutionary unity of the Polish and Russian proletariat. Now it must be directed against the Stalinist bureaucracies, in defense of the collectivized economies and proletarian state powers against the threat of capitalist-imperialism.

The leadership of "Solidarity" stands directly opposed to these principles. Wałęsa and his colleagues see themselves leading the entire Polish nation against Russian "Communism". This is most strongly expressed in their active support to the peasant organization, Rural Solidarity. In fact, the recent near general strike was called primarily on behalf of the peasant organization. Expressing the acquisitive appetites of Poland's numerous landowning peasants, Rural Solidarity aims at the complete reestablishment of capitalist relations in the countryside. Its non-economic demands include the construction of more churches, no restriction of religious education and an end to compulsory teaching of Russian in the schools. Little wonder, then, that Pope Wojtyla himself demanded that the Warsaw regime recognize Rural Solidarity, a potent base for capitalist restoration. The fact that the Stalinist regime has just legitimized this peasant organization, reversing its earlier stand, marks a major concession to the forces of reaction.

The socialist answer to Rural Solidarity is not maintaining the status quo in the countryside. For that situation is disastrous. Poland's inefficient, aging smallholders are a major barrier to balanced

economic development. The \$10 billion food subsidy — the difference between what the state pays the farmers and what it charges urban consumers — is by far the largest item in the government budget and accounts for a significant share of total national income. Russian and Ukrainian collective farms now supply Poland with food, even though the consumption level, especially of meat, is much higher in Warsaw and Gdansk than in Moscow and Kiev. An immediate key task for a revolutionary soviet government in Poland would be to *promote the collectivization of agriculture*. Cheap credit and generous social services should be given to those peasants who pool their land and labor. Those who want to remain petty agricultural capitalists should be subject to higher taxes and other forms of *economic* discrimination.

Along with the backward smallholding agriculture, an enormous foreign debt is at the root of the current Polish economic crisis. During the 1970s the Gierek regime tried to buy off the workers and peasants with massive loans contracted from the West. His successors have accelerated this disastrous policy. Poland's debt to the West has increased by one-third in the last seven months alone! Repaying the bankers of Frankfurt and Wall Street will absorb all of Poland's hard-currency export earnings for years to come. (And no small share of Soviet hard-currency exports are expended on repaying directly or indirectly Poland's Western capitalist creditors.) The demand to *cancel the imperialist debt* is crucial in breaking the capitalist stranglehold on the Polish economy. But this would be possible only under a revol-

utionary soviet regime which could counter imperialist economic retaliation by appealing to the workers of West Europe to become comrades in international socialist planning in a Socialist United States of Europe.

As important as appeals to the working class of the capitalist West are to a proletarian political revolution in Poland, still more important is the perspective toward such a revolution in the Soviet Union. Should the Kremlin intervene militarily, the immediate fate of the Polish workers would in large measure depend on their ability to influence and win over Soviet conscript soldiers — that is, young Russian, Ukrainian and Central Asian workers and peasants in uniform. Anti-Russian Polish nationalism, and especially violence directed at Soviet soldiers or officers, would sabotage the proletarian cause.

Here it is important to recognize that illusions about "good will" and peacefulness of the Western capitalist powers, common in East Europe and particularly Poland, do not extend to the Soviet Union. After losing 20 million fighting Nazi Germany, the Soviet people understand full well that NATO's nuclear arsenal is targeted at them. This understanding is now heightened by Washington's open threats of a nuclear first strike. The Soviet people legitimately fear the transformation of East Europe into hostile, imperialist-allied states extending to their own border.

The Kremlin bureaucrats exploit this legitimate fear to crush popular unrest and democratic aspirations in East Europe, as in Czechoslovakia in 1968. But the situation in Poland today is significantly different from that during the "Prague Spring". Anti-Russian nationalism is far more virulent, while Washington and its NATO allies are being far more provocative and militarily threatening. For these reasons the question of defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism takes on far greater importance in the present Polish crisis. Revolutionary Polish workers cannot hope to appeal to Soviet soldiers unless they assure them that they will defend the social gains of the October Revolution against imperialist attack.

*Only by addressing their Soviet class brothers in the name of socialist internationalism can the Polish proletariat liberate itself from the chains of Stalinist oppression. With this perspective a Trotskyist vanguard in Poland could turn a looming catastrophe into a great victory for world socialism.*

— reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 279, 24 April 1981

## Gay "socialists" run from Russian question

MELBOURNE, 26 April — Over 150 people attended the Socialism and Homosexuality Conference here this weekend, at a time when gays are increasingly the target of reactionary, anti-working-class forces. Yet the supporters of several male homosexual and lesbian groups, the Sydney Gay Collective of the Communist Party (CPA) and Melbourne CPA, the International Socialists (IS), and the clot of ex-members of the Socialist Workers Party who were present, all attempted from the start to keep discussion within the sectoralist confines of the "gay community". The conference was forced to address the burning class questions, however, when a motion linking the current attacks on gays to the right-wing anti-Soviet climate was passed unanimously (with one abstention) by the Spartacist League (SL)-convened workshop on the NSW ALP's current anti-porn campaign.

At the opening plenary, the SL was refused speaking time to motivate the document we had submitted — "Defend the gains of October" from *Red Flag*, the organ of the Red Flag Union, a US gay leftist group which fused with the SL/US in 1977. The IS at first claimed to support the position that the SL is widely known for, that for homosexuals (and

women) "Autonomy is not an option" — that the attempt to build "autonomous" movements of sections of the oppressed is a utopian dead end. But at today's session, IS leader Janey Stone pulled back from their initial verbal concession to class-struggle politics, declaring "We are neither for nor against autonomy; we object to people seeing autonomy as an end in itself".

The CPA and various independents wanted an "autonomous" gay movement because they were "tired of heterosexuals telling homosexuals what to do". Many identified the high point for the gay movement of the seventies as the aftermath of the gay Mardi Gras in Sydney in 1978, where Wran's cops brutally attacked the march and arrested scores of participants. SLer Jeff McCarthy, a former CPAer and at the time a member of the Gay Solidarity Group, took the floor to puncture this fantasy: "The defence campaign was a defeat — the reality was [NSW attorney general] Frank Walker opening the 1979 [gay] Summer Offensive, and Frank Walker was the man responsible for the arrests!"

Throughout the weekend it was the SL which took a class-struggle stand on the oppression of women and gays: against the reactionary Khomeini regime in Iran;

for the Red Army in Afghanistan fighting to free women from the veil. An SL supporter at the Saturday plenary put on the floor the motion from the workshop: "Reagan and Fraser's anti-Soviet war drive ... has created a fertile climate for right-wing mobilisations of all kinds, [including] the 'We Care' anti-union mobilisations, the 'Aussies Care' marches against sex shops and pornography and the defeat of the amendment to decriminalise homosexuality in NSW.... Democratic rights are indivisible.... This conference condemns the ALP leadership for its primary role in the defeat of the Petersen amendment and calls on the ALP, the left and the labour movement to stand in defence of full democratic rights for gays and demands the repeal of all anti-homosexual legislation."

Minutes later amendments and procedural motions were proliferating, including one (which some CPAers backed) to suppress the SL-initiated motion altogether. In the upshot, the motion and amendments were tabled to today's session. Craig Johnston, who had tried to amend out the "controversial" parts (read: Marxist) the previous day, came in with a foreshadowed substitute co-supported by Iser Graham Willett which

removed all reference to the Soviet Union, the anti-union marches and the anti-porn campaigns in favour of a vague reference to "the world economic crisis of capitalism".

In the debate which followed, several who spoke for the Willett/Johnston motion claimed that as socialists they agreed with the need to defend the USSR, but criticised the SL motion on secondary grounds. Willett, however, got up and said that as a longtime Iser he *didn't* defend the USSR — the scurrilous position the IS had up till then evaded defending. With the aid of this rotten bloc — Johnston claims to defend the USSR — the motion from the workshop was defeated, after which the Willett/Johnston motion passed unanimously; the conference had "succeeded" in taking no stand whatsoever on the most burning, global question, the anti-Soviet war drive!

At the close of the meeting the IS and CPA linked arms to sing the "Red Flag"! Cowards flinch and traitors sneer, in the words of the song. Their head-in-the-sand sectoralism cannot defend gay rights much less defend and extend the gains of October. That requires the revolutionary Trotskyist program and perspective put forward by the Spartacist League. ■

## El Salvador...

Continued from page seven

the center, filling the street. The march was reaching the center of town as it was still leaving the origin, so this was an incredibly huge demonstration to inaugurate this far-left coalition, comprising just the "Marxist-Leninist" groups that I mentioned. As the head of the march was entering the center of town, it was ambushed. There were snipers in some government buildings at the center of town, the national palace, the communications in the center of town. The official death toll was 21 dead, and then there were supposedly some 70 wounded. It's really hard to say what the real toll was, because you had tens of thousands of people in the streets when the shooting started.

Of course the march was dispersed. I would say that the massacre of the 22nd of January last year marked the last large popular demonstration. There had been, of course, many massacres before the 22nd, and there were going to be a couple afterwards, as Archbishop Romero's funeral was to show — but I think that the 22nd marked the point at which the far left began to realize that the struggle wasn't going to be won by mobilizing these people to march unarmed into the center of the city. It was more and more clear that victory for the people was going to be through armed struggle in the countryside and in the cities.

WV: I understand that the Social Democrats and Christian Democrats who are now in the FDR did not endorse or join the demonstration.

Janota: No. As I say, they were still in January hoping for some kind of compromise with the armed forces. Of course, after the cabinet resigned the Christian Democrats decided that they could make a deal with the military, even though some of their own members had resigned from the previous junta, saying that the power lay with the minister of defense. But there were also then a series of massacres and assassinations in February and March, which led to even further defections from these "Moderate" groups. For instance, the Christian Democratic party split in March after a series of assassinations of key Christian Democratic leaders. Part of the party, the Popular Tendency, split taking with them a couple of ministers. In March you have the assassination of the Christian Democratic solicitor-general; the assassination of one of the UDN

leaders and his wife, a Danish citizen; the assassination of the founder of FAPU; the assassination of eleven high school students who were holding a meeting in San Miguel in their high school rooms, surrounded by tanks and heavy implements and just blown out of the classroom; and then, of course, the March 24 assassination of Romero.

So finally, in April of 1980, these dissident Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats represented by Ungo, and some of the other more "moderate" groups, decided to make a coalition with this Revolutionary Coordinating Committee of the Masses that had already been formed, and this new coalition was to be called the Frente Democratico Revolucionario, the FDR.

WV: I have two final questions. Firstly, how would you think that the workers and peasants are beginning to feel about the leaders of the FDR, insofar as there can be any evidence that military victory is being treated as an illusory ideal. And also how are they beginning to feel in regard to the Nicaraguans and the Soviets?

Janota: Of course, the Sandinistas made a big impression in Salvador. And it was evident to most working people that they had much in common with the Sandinistas, that they were kind of brothers in revolution. So there was widespread support for what was happening in Nicaragua. And also the realization that similar conditions existed in Salvador and that a similar solution was going to be called for. I think now you have the Salvadorans seeing that it's coming up to a question of either defeating the military and the oligarchy militarily, or basically giving up the whole hope of change. I think people realize now that there won't be a compromise, there won't be a deal that will work in Salvador because the situation is so polarized right now.

Talking about last year, I think that most of the popular support is with these left-wing groups — the BPR, the LP-28, FAPU. I think there is a suspicion of the bourgeois leaders like Ungo and so forth who have kind of tacked themselves on to this movement belatedly. I think, they can very well see that Ungo represents another class. So you have a case where the leadership of the FDR really is, I would say, out of touch with the realities of the working-class person or the peasant in Salvador. They are the ones who want to see some change in their lives, their daily lives. And during the first coalition cabinet they already had a

chance to see what Ungo and the others could do. And they have proven themselves unable to control the military.

So I think there's probably a skepticism about what the FDR is going to be able to do for the average working person. For instance, if the rebels were victorious there would almost certainly be another conflict within the FDR itself as the more radical members, basically the guerrillas, saying, "Well, we fought for certain basic structural changes, and we must have them". And so far, the leadership of the FDR keep hedging around making these basic and far-reaching changes in the social structure. There are divisions now, and I think that if they were victorious, those divisions would even be more serious.

WV: Which is precisely why the leaders of the FDR prefer not to be Victorious. And I think one important point is that you yourself did not understand the pattern of the FDR until you actually began to read *Workers Vanguard* and *Young Spartacus*.

Janota: Right. As I was saying, probably up until November of last year I was the FDR supporter feeling that well, this was a broad coalition of the opposition groups that perhaps had some chance of marshaling international public opinion in favor of the revolution. And also in unifying the left opposition. As I've read more and as I've looked closer at the FDR platform, for example, and have read more about popular front experiments in the past, I've been seeing that the average working person — their interests are not in this kind of arrangement in a popular front coalition, because their interest will always be subverted to the interest of the capitalist class as long as this popular front insists on placating the capitalist interests.

There's a great deal of turmoil in Salvador and there has been for the last couple of years. There have been movements, occupations of estates, occupations of factories. The peasants want to have land and the workers want to have greater control of the working place. These are basic desires of the people. If the FDR were to come to power, they would have to find a way to bring these movements under control because they aren't willing to allow them a free rein. I think there would be again the possibility of even the FDR cracking down on its own former supporters among the working class and peasantry. They aren't willing to carry out the basic changes of the socialist revolution that must be made there.

WV: Thank you very much, Tom. ■

## Day of Action...

Continued from page six

Freeman, against ... the IS! In sharp contrast to his Sydney counterparts, he spoke in *opposition* to the official CISCAC demands of "US hands off! No aid to killer junta!" (itself an apparent concession to the left) and "end Australian support to Reagan's intervention". He called for a "clear class line" and expressed agreement with the SL motion — wanting only to replace "Defence of Cuba, USSR begins in El Salvador" with "Stop the war drive against Cuba and the USSR".

This implicit Soviet defencism constituted a sharp, if incomplete, break to the left from the IS, whose hate-Russia third-campism is so strong that they even demonstrated against the Moscow Olympics at the height of Fraser's imperialist boycott campaign last year. On April 3, they had marched behind the anti-Soviet banner, "Smash imperialism East and West". And what about his Sydney comrades' *counterposed* support for CISCAC and the FDR popular front? Confronted, Freeman replied that if we wanted to know the group's "national position, we should write to the national executive". Such flippant evasions will not enable would-be "anti-imperialist" ISers to escape the Russian question: opposition to US imperialism means Soviet defencism, posing a break from the "third camp" to Trotskyism.

In the event, SWP chairman Dave Deutschmann bureaucratically refused to even put to a vote either our motion or the IS "amendment". The CISCAC proposal was railroaded through, along with a closed platform for the 13 June rally.

A Spartacist speaker at the Sydney meeting outlined why the struggle to smash the junta was linked to the perspective of permanent revolution. Even democratic demands such as land to the tiller, the right to strike can be gained only if the working class breaks from the bourgeoisie and takes power in its own name. To those who said, "Let the people decide", he replied: "Class struggle decides". Chile and Indonesia showed that if the working masses do not break from the so-called "progressive" bourgeoisie in time, reaction will drown them in blood. It is futile to try to "pressure" the US ruling class; the US imperialists are not about to pull back unless they are defeated in battle.

The SWP tried to pretend that they were really *for* military victory. This fraud

# Subscription drive resounding success!

The 1981 Australasian Spartacist subscription drive, which ended 1 April, has been a resounding success. The final total reached was 883 points, representing 126 percent of the quota set. The Sydney branch achieved 572 points (quota 450) while Melbourne's total was 311 (quota 250).

The final total covers not only subscriptions to ASp but also to other papers and journals of the International Spartacist tendency, most notably *Workers Vanguard* and *Women and Revolution*, published by the Spartacist League/US. *Women and Revolution*, journal of the Women's Commission of the SL/US, sold particularly well, allowing us to double our previous subscription base.

The bulk of the points came though, from ASp subscriptions. During the month we increased our subscription base by 27 percent compared to the pre-sub drive figures, testimony to our growth as a pole of political authority within the left and labour movement. 41 percent of the total points came from resubscribers, many of long years standing. 38 percent of the subscriptions were sold on campuses in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Wollongong and Canberra — reflecting our continuing work on some campuses and potential growth at others. In addition a significant number of subscriptions were sold at industrial locations, chiefly those where SL supporters are active in their trade unions. This expansion of the paper's circulation is an indispensable part of our efforts to deepen and extend our roots in the organised labour movement.

This year's subscription drive was won by Comrade Rita S of Sydney with 65.5 points; runners up were Kyle M with 65 points and Jenny M with 60. In Melbourne, Comrade Flora G came first with 51 points.

*Australasian Spartacist* exists not just to interpret the world, but to change it. To our old subscribers as well as to our new readers we pledge to bring you the truth about the world today and a revolutionary program to overthrow this decaying capitalist system and to replace it with world socialism.



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was exposed when Poulsen successfully counterposed to the SL motion the demands: "US hands off", "Support the people of El Salvador" and "No Australian complicity with the junta". Finally the SWP & Co voted down an SL motion for an open speakers platform. Poulsen wanted no talk of "military victory", preferring instead a representative of the Maryknoll order of Catholic nuns (three of whom were brutally murdered by pro-junta forces in El Salvador last October).

In the Vietnam Moratoria, reformists like the CPA and SWP called for "negotiations now" and "bring our boys home". Our tendency proclaimed, "All Indochina Must Go Communist", and said that our boys were the heroic fighters in the Viet Cong. Today the reformists are trying to recreate the Vietnam-era alliance with the ruling-class "doves", when they climbed aboard the bandwagon of bourgeois defeatism over Vietnam. But you don't get bourgeois defeatism unless the bourgeoisie is getting defeated!

Today again it is the Trotskyists of the Spartacist League who stand for the military victory of the anti-junta fighters in El Salvador. And we have the spectacle of the SWP, which adulates Cuban Stalinist bureaucrat Fidel Castro, and the SPA coming out *against* a fight to mobilise for the defence of the deformed and degenerated workers states. But that defence is our duty. What's needed is hundreds and thousands marching for military victory to left-wing insurgents in El Salvador and the international labour movement using its power to stop the Pentagon warmongers. Anti-imperialism abroad means class struggle at home! For an anti-imperialist contingent on June 13! ■

## Coal...

Continued from page five

top — Sam Church & Co. All along Sellout Sam has been advertising the possibility of a "no-strike" contract year, even going so far as to suggest violating the principle of "no contract, no work". Then he came in with the BCOA's takeaway contract, announcing a "happy day". And all along he tried to scare the miners with gloomy talk about another long strike if they voted "no". Church is a defeatist, trying to repeat his role of 1977-78, when he ran the union for Arnold Miller, who was forced into hiding to avoid angry miners. Miller's tactic was to wait until the miners were exhausted, then hand them the bosses' contract. Church has been doing the same thing from the get go.

But the miners are wise to Church's manoeuvres. On 27 March, Church was expected at Dille's Bottom, Ohio for a contract briefing of local officers from across UMWA Local 6. According to one official, "They were waiting for him down there. Oh Christ, they had tomatoes, rotten eggs, all kinds of stuff. They already had signs all posted up on the road". Apparently Church was forewarned because he skipped Ohio altogether, and appeared only in

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## Spartacist League

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Wheeling for a radio talk show. The station was picketed by 150 miners who pounded on his car yelling "sellout, sellout!"

The following day, one of Church's representatives turned up *five hours late* for a Local 6290 (Jones & Laughlin Steel) contract briefing attended by 300 miners. When asked why the delay, the rep replied "My bulletproof vest is at the cleaners"! What Church stands for was well captured by a miner's homemade sign, carried during an April 1 march in Masontown, Pennsylvania: "Sam sold our souls for a lump of scab coal".

In an unusual provocation, the bosses of the BCOA have tried to intervene on Church's side. BCOA spokesman B R Brown taunted: "The majority of the miners voting apparently chose to listen to dissidents who were not involved in the bargaining process and who, for whatever reason, misrepresented the agreement and assured its defeat." Church's spokesman Eldon Callen was quick to take Brown's cue: "There appears to have been a major conspiracy to defeat the contract in some of the districts with upcoming elections." But as one militant from Logan told *Workers Vanguard*, "I'm proud to be in that conspiracy of 70,000". For it was nearly *two-thirds* of the membership which voted the sellout deal down. Miners must stand together against the bosses' intrusion into union affairs and against this witchhunting of militants.

### Class-struggle leadership needed

You can't win a strike if traitors at the top keep stabbing you in the back. Church is not the only one involved — the bargaining council voted 21-14 for the contract. The membership must demand an emergency Special International Convention as provided in the UMWA constitution to elect a new leadership and bargaining council which reflect the sentiments of the rank and file. Such a convention should also send an official UMWA delegation to appeal in person to the various railroad unions for a joint strike. At the same time, locals must elect strike committees to take charge of the strike; these committees must link up at emergency district meetings to ensure a militant and coordinated strike strategy and a new, elected bargaining council.

There have been too many "reformers" in the UMWA who have stood for nothing but opposition to the previous incumbents. One-time "dissidents" like Jack Perry and Tommy Gaston (presidents of Districts 17 and 23 respectively) were actually installed at the suggestion of the Labor Department in the last strike — and were instrumental in negotiating a defeat for the union. If you're up against the BCOA, the White House and Sellout Sam, you need a class-struggle program and leadership to win. And that means fighting politically as well. One miner at the UMWA's March 9 march on Washington carried a sign lamenting: "America, I'm sorry I voted for Reagan". But the miners' cause will not be served by putting back those phony "friends of labour", the Democratic Party of Jimmy "Taft-Hartley" Carter. UMWA militants must call for a break with *both* capitalist parties and for building a workers party, which would demand expropriation without compensation of the profiteering energy trusts and fight for a workers government. The bosses will fight this politically, and so must any union leadership that aims to *win!*

— adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 277, 27 March 1981.

## H-Block...

Continued from page twelve

local H-Block committee outside the British Airways building. Our contingent advanced a program to win in Ireland, raising the demands, "Smash Britain's Torture Camps!", "Free Bobby Sands! Troops Out Now!", "Not Orange against

Green, but Class against Class! For a Workers Republic in Ireland!"

The struggle for political status is manifestly not enough, though. Improvements in prison conditions and other "concessions" from bloody imperialism can only be seen as a subordinate part of the struggle to mobilise the proletariat — Catholic and Protestant — to drive out the British troops and for a workers solution to the "Irish question". For the Provisional leadership, though, the H-Block campaign is based on an appeal to liberal humanitarian sentiment, a "human rights" cause which can be

Protestant workers in south Armagh in 1976. Marxists defend the IRA in its military conflicts with the British army, the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Ulster Defence Regiment. But random attacks on innocent workers, selected because they happen to be Protestant or even English, are indefensible acts of terror which must be condemned.

Only the forging of a revolutionary vanguard party which shatters sectarian barriers and unites Catholic and Protestant workers against British imperialism and the domestic Orange and Green capitalists can show the way forward for



**Bobby Sands, Provisional IRA hunger-striker and newly elected MP. Sentenced to 14 years in British imperialism's H-block concentration camp for "possessing a revolver", Sands is fasting for political status for Republican prisoners.**

used to pressure and cajole imperialism into being "fair".

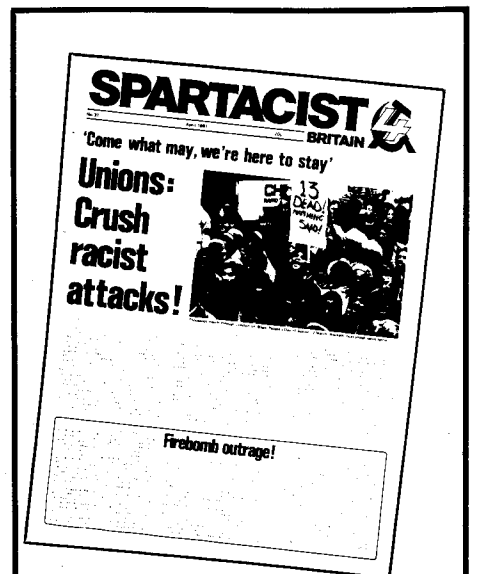
But like the hunger strike, this strategy is a *losing* one, based on a deep-rooted pessimism about being able to mobilise the working class to smash imperialist rule in Ireland. The IRA lord mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, who died in Brixton Prison in 1920 after 75 days on hunger strike, reflected this well when he said, "It is not those who inflict the most, but those who endure the most, who win". For petty-bourgeois nationalists, the working class is simply a "people that endures", the passive pedestal upon which the IRA carries out its elitist "physical force" policies. Mass demonstrations and more particularly proletarian industrial action which shuts the factories, the mines and the docks — these are at most a temporary auxiliary to the bomb and the gun. No wonder. If the goal is a united capitalist Ireland — no different in essence from the priest-ridden Republic of Ireland only six counties bigger — then mobilising the proletariat makes little sense. In fact, it's a counterposed strategy.

The Provos' perspective of unification with the capitalist South not only offers no real solution for the Catholic minority but stands as a roadblock to breaking Protestant workers from their Orange capitalist masters. The Protestant workers are not a labour aristocracy with a vested interest in imperialism. Like the oppressed Catholic minority they have good reason to hate the capitalist system. Unemployment in the North is over 17 percent. Shipyards are dying. Housing in both the Shankill and the Falls Road areas of Belfast is unfit for human habitation. But mobilising the power of the proletariat against imperialism demands a leadership prepared to pose the revolutionary socialist transformation of society, against the nationalists and reformists who all end up squabbling over whether the Protestants should have more than their fair share of the meagre crumbs.

The Protestants have evolved as a distinct community with its own culture and traditions. When they look South and see the nationalists doing their best to perpetuate the spiritual and temporal rule of the Catholic church — banning contraception, abortion and divorce — then they have good reason to oppose the prospect of a Green united Ireland. Such an outcome would mean the reversal of the current terms of oppression; instead of the Catholics being the underdog, the Protestants would be. That's a barrier to class unification — and one reinforced when the IRA commits sectarian atrocities such as the gunning down of eleven innocent

the toiling masses of Ireland. An Irish workers republic, part of a socialist federation of the British Isles, is the only state which can equitably resolve the national question and ensure freedom for the working people of both communities.

The Irish revolutionary party will be built in implacable struggle against not only Orange Loyalism but also Green nationalism. However, even as they raise high the red banner of proletarian internationalism, the communists of Ireland will uphold the best traditions of those who, in however flawed or partial a manner, sought to fight against British imperialism. In particular, those who were jailed or martyred for their struggles will be avenged in the future Irish workers state — including the militants like Bobby Sands who campaign heroically today in the hellholes of Long Kesh. Free the H-Block prisoners! British troops out now! ■



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## Free H-Block political prisoners!

# Smash Britain's torture camps!



London, November 1980: Spartacist League/Britain calls for smashing of H-Blocks, troops out of Ireland.

24 APRIL — The long-simmering Irish crisis is set to explode. As Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) hunger striker and newly elected member of the Westminster parliament Bobby Sands nears death, there are nightly street battles throughout Northern Ireland as Catholic youths protest the hated British army of occupation. And everyone knows that if Sands does die the riots will massively escalate. Tory prime minister Margaret Thatcher, backed by Her Majesty's loyal Labour opposition, appears determined to brazen it out and ignore the inevitable international furore over the death of an MP in the notorious Long Kesh H-Blocks.

The Iron Maiden took time out from her arms-selling journey through Saudi Arabia to pour cold water on a "peace mission" by three Republic of Ireland "Europoliticians" and declare with typical imperialist arrogance: "Crime is crime — it is not political and there can be no question of granting political status". But it is not the courageous Sands, jailed for fourteen years for supposedly possessing a revolver, who is the criminal in Northern Ireland. On 20 April a British Army Land Rover came screaming over a hill in Derry City and "accidentally" slammed directly into a crowd of Catholic demonstrators, killing two eighteen year old youths. But even this atrocity has not intimidated demonstrators supporting the H-Block prisoners.

The origins of the present crisis date back to 1976 when the British Labour government abolished "Special

Category" political status for Republican prisoners, a demand originally conceded in 1972 by William Whitelaw, then Tory secretary of state for Northern Ireland, after a bitterly waged mass hunger strike. Since 1976, prisoners have refused to wear prescribed prison uniforms and have had only a blanket to cover them. With the walls of their cells smeared with human excrement and with brutal prison warders doling out regular beatings, life for the "men on the blanket" has been a veritable living hell.

### H-Block hell-hole

Towards the end of last year, seven of the prisoners launched a desperate hunger strike to win back political status. On 18 December, an agreement was reached with the Thatcher government and the strike was called off. The IRA immediately claimed a "resounding victory", despite the fact that the deal fell far short of granting political status. But British imperialism quickly reneged on even the limited promises made, triggering Sands' fast.

Then, to the acute embarrassment of Whitehall, Sands was elected in early April as a member of parliament in the Fermanagh-South Tyrone by-election. In a poll marked by an 87.5 percent voter turnout, Sands defeated his Unionist rival and collected over 30,000 votes. Sands' victory was by no means unprecedented; in 1869 the Fenian prisoner O'Donovan Rossa was elected MP for Tipperary. But Sands' election in 1981 had a different impact. As the *Guardian Weekly*

(19 April) commented: "Years of myth-making go out of the window with the election of Bobby Sands as MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone. And the biggest myth is that the IRA in its violent phase represents only a tiny minority of the population." At once Tory and Labour politicians set about discussing whether or not to expel Sands from the "mother of parliaments"; in the end, they decided simply to sit and wait for his death. (Ironically, if Sands lives, he would refuse "on principle" — as a loyal IRA volunteer — to swear the oath of allegiance to the Queen and take his seat in Westminster.)

As the H-Block campaign has evoked increasing support outside the prison walls it has been met with savage terror by paramilitary Loyalist gangs. In the past six months four prominent campaign leaders have been assassinated by these thugs and/or the British undercover agency, the SAS. This terror offensive culminated in January with the near fatal multiple wounding of Bernadette Devlin McAliskey and her husband Michael.

Most recently the reactionary Loyalist demagogue Ian Paisley has been beating the drums for Orange ascendancy by taking to the "Carson trail" — a reference to Sir Edward Carson, the Unionist

politician who in 1912 rallied Ulster Protestants against Home Rule (limited autonomy for Ireland) with the infamous slogans, "Home Rule means Rome Rule" and "Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right". Claiming that the on-again off-again "consultations" between Thatcher and Charles Haughey's Dublin government is the start of a "sellout of Ulster", Paisley has been adding muscle to this familiar Orange Lodge rhetoric by leading moonlight military parades throughout the province. With Northern Ireland on the brink of a bloody denouement, the threat of a major escalation of imperialist and sectarian violence against the Catholic minority is very real.

### Troops out of Ireland now!

Revolutionaries support the just demands of the nationalist prisoners in Britain's Long Kesh torture camps and the fight for political status. It is the urgent duty of the labour movement internationally to mobilise in defence of Bobby Sands and his comrades. In Sydney on 18 April a strong Spartacist League contingent participated in a sixty-strong demonstration called by the

Continued on page eleven

## March with the Spartacist League on May Day

Moscow, November 1917: Russian workers unfurl the Red Flag after their victorious overthrow of capitalist class rule. 64 years later the imperialist powers still aim to "roll back" the fundamental conquest of that revolution — the collectivised, planned economy which remains intact despite the Stalinist degeneration of the USSR. Today Ronald Reagan has chosen El Salvador as the front line in his Cold War drive against the USSR. The Spartacist League will demonstrate on May 3 with a revolutionary internationalist program to oppose imperialism's nuclear war plans: Defence of Cuba, USSR begins in El Salvador! Military victory to leftist insurgents! Down with the junta! Defend the Soviet bloc against internal or external attempts at capitalist restorationism! For proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies — from Havana to Warsaw, from Moscow to Peking! For a world party of socialist revolution, a reformed Fourth International, to lead the working class to the World October!

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Join our contingents in Melbourne and Sydney! Contact: Melbourne (03) 662-3740, Sydney (02) 264-8195. After the march come to Spartacist League socials: Sydney — 112 Goulburn St, 2nd Floor, City, 5pm. Melbourne — meet at our banner after the rally.