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Defend Vietnam and the Soviet Union!

US/China Anti-Soviet War Axis



Haig, Deng cement anti-Soviet alliance.

The following article, in slightly abridged form, is reprinted from the 3 July issue of *Workers Vanguard*, paper of the Spartacist League/US. Written just after US Secretary of State Haig's conclusion of the arms deal with China, it stands as an excellent Trotskyist analysis of the rapidly escalating US war drive aimed at the USSR. Events since then have only confirmed this analysis. Reagan has announced his decision to build the neutron bomb, the US has deliberately provoked a military confrontation with Libyan planes in the Mediterranean and South Africa has launched a military invasion into Angola. Every development in the US imperialists' reckless course toward nuclear war underlies the urgency and centrality of the Trotskyist position of unconditional military defence of the USSR, Vietnam and all the deformed workers states, upheld only by the international Spartacist tendency.

Concretely for Australian revolutionaries this means first and foremost a struggle against the Australian bourgeoisie and its reformist lackeys. Through the ANZUS alliance, Australia and New Zealand are US imperialism's most craven allies and junior partners in this region and comprise a strategic component of its international military deployment against the USSR and Vietnam. In this region defence of Vietnam and the Soviet Union begins in the fight against the American imperialists' attempts to secure a naval base at Trincomalee, its military base in Diego Garcia, and against the US naval communications station at North-West Cape, the CIA-run spy satellite tracking stations

at Pine Gap/Nurrungar, the Omega and NAVSTAR navigational systems for the US nuclear submarine fleet, and the B-52 bases in Darwin. All these are vitally important to US preparations for nuclear first-strike capacity and constitute a major interlocking contribution to the war drive.

The commitment of Australian troops to the Sinai "peace-keeping force" is still

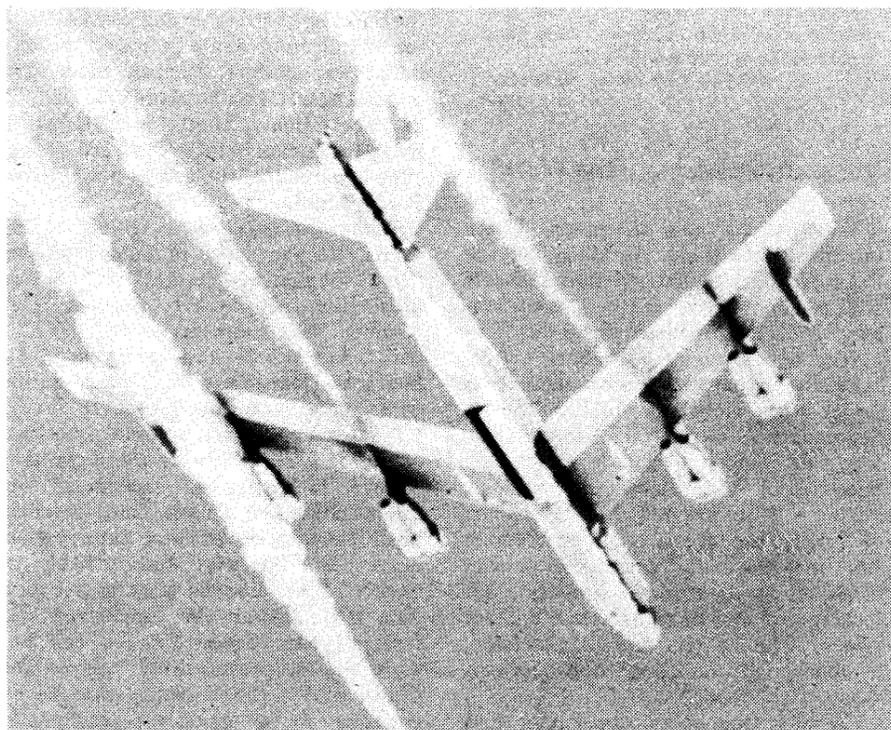
being mooted, but there is no doubt that the Australian ruling class stands ready to act as policemen for the US in the Asian region. It is in the thick of the reactionary plots against Vietnam being hatched at events such as the UN conference on Kampuchea.

The ALP leadership fully supports the ANZUS alliance, the US bases and the anti-Soviet war drive. The "left" of the

ALP's claims to be against US bases, their talk of a "non-aligned" foreign policy, is nothing but empty nationalist pap to cover up their true allegiances. For the Australian bourgeoisie and social democracy the US bases are vital, not only to their continued role as bootlicking junior partners to the US, but as "national defence" against the "yellow peril". The fear of communism in Asia is just the flip side of their defence of capitalist racist "White Australia". For Australian communists, genuine internationalism means that defence of the USSR and Vietnam begins at home, fighting to smash the imperialist ANZUS and ASEAN alliances and to drive the US bases out of Australia and the Indian Ocean. Down with Australian jackal imperialism! The main enemy is at home. Forward to the Australian workers revolution!

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General Haig's announcement at the end of his China trip that the US will arm Peking with "lethal weapons" is the most dangerous provocation against the USSR since this most provocative Reagan regime took office six months ago. It is not merely another finesse of "China card" diplomacy. The deepening US/China alliance has now become an openly declared anti-Soviet military axis — a deal for action against the Soviets and to "increase the political, economic, and, yes, military pressures on Vietnam" (*New York Times*, 18 June). Like the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931,



Darwin based B-52s: Key to US/Australia anti-Soviet war drive.

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US/China . . .

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now recognised as the very first shots of World War II, the US/China arms deal may well be the direct prelude to WWII.

Joint American/Chinese military support to anti-Russian Afghans and anti-Vietnamese Cambodians is envisioned. The Chinese bless the Americans to deepen their military commitment in El Salvador and against Nicaragua and Cuba. Surely an attempted military "rollback" in Angola and Namibia, to be fronted by South Africa, is foreseen. But the one-family-run Saudi Arabia and the hated Zia of Pakistan are less than slender reeds. And as for Begin's Israel: whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad. Considerable arm-twisting of West European allies and increasingly of an uneasy Japan are also in the cards if an effective Chinese/American bloc is to be consummated — at a cost of hundreds of billions of dollars from an economically weakened United States.

Now Haig shouts in the face of the Soviets that two years ago — when Washington lost its "listening stations" in Iran with the mullah victory over the US-backed shah — the US built a super spy station embedded in the Sinkiang mountains near the Soviet border. The Chinese spy station is the one place where US imperialism can monitor Soviet missile tests from launch through flight over Siberia to dispersion of warheads. Together the Chinese Stalinists and their CIA "advisers" gather the most sensitive military intelligence to use against the Russians: missile range, accuracy, payload, communications guidance.

The shift to an announced military alliance opens the way for Peking to modernize its arsenal with US guidance systems for strategic weapons, anti-tank missiles, fighter planes, a delivery system for its primitive nuclear weapons and every kind of combat hardware. Just how much of this war machinery the Chinese military can absorb and pay for in the immediate future is not now known. But next month, their generals will be taking the short march to the Pentagon with a considerable shopping list.

The Russians have warned many times of the consequences of the US arming China with strategic weapons. And this week again Russia warned simply and without bluster that "nobody should doubt that the Soviet people, who have good nerves and powerful means of curbing aggression, will not yield to provocations and will be able to stand up for themselves, to defend the interests of their friends and allies".

The Russian perception of the US/China axis is well known. Few things this side of an actual US military adventure against the Soviet Union, Cuba or the Eastern bloc could be as provocative as the arming of China. The

view from the Kremlin is that China is even more likely than the US to squeeze the nuclear trigger in a bout of fanatical anti-Soviet frenzy and miscalculated geo-political strategy. And the Soviets may well be right. It is more than their traditional fear of encirclement by hostile powers that accounts for their obsession with China. Mao and his heirs have seemed quite crazed in their view of nuclear war. The most recent *Pravda* article, for instance, notes that "Peking has its own interests to pursue, namely to set the United States and the Soviet Union against each other so as to be able to dominate the world after a nuclear conflict". And this view of China is not new. Khrushchev recalled a conversation with Mao Tse-tung as they sunbathed at poolside in Peking in 1954:

"Mao replied by trying to assure me that the Atomic bomb was a paper tiger! 'Listen Comrade Khrushchev', he said. 'All you have to do is provoke the Americans into military action and I'll give you as many military divisions as you need to crush them — a hundred, two hundred, one thousand divisions.' I tried to explain to him that one or two missiles could turn all the divisions in China to dust. But he wouldn't even listen. And obviously regarded me as a coward."

— *Khrushchev Remembers*, 1970

The US/China war axis is certainly a sinister and strangely complementary affair. Reagan and Haig dream of being the victorious survivors of a nuclear war against Russia due to high-tech "Star Wars" weapons superiority, while their Russian-hating allies in Peking nurture survival fantasies based on technological and underdevelopment — sheer numbers.

It was Carter and Brzezinski who launched the present thrust toward war with the Soviets, and Reagan has escalated it dangerously. There are some things the Russians cannot abide, and Reagan knows it. When Harold Brown, Carter's defense secretary, went to China to point the way toward overt military collaboration, we wrote:

"It is simply too dangerous for the Russians if the U.S. doomsday machinery is placed in the hands of the Chinese. For the Russians playing the China card is no diplomatic game; it is a matter of life and death."

— "Russians Fed Up", *Workers Vanguard* no 249, 8 February 1980

For the Russians, taking out the Chinese strategic weapons is not at all unthinkable. Last January, Leonid Brezhnev pounded a desk in Paris and laid out the Chinese tripwire for World War III. He was quoted by the president of the French national assembly as saying:

"Believe me, after the destruction of Chinese nuclear sites by our missiles, there won't be much time for the Americans to choose between the defense of their Chinese allies and peaceful co-existence with us."

— *New York Times*, 30 January 1980

Vietnam, Poland . . . the World

When China gets the guns, China intends to use them. As Haig and the Peking leaders exchanged smiles, toasts and condemnations of the "main enemy", Soviet "expansionism", they also agreed on the regional "danger". Russia's ally Vietnam is the more immediate target in the global war against "Soviet hegemonism". The US imperialists long to punish Vietnam not only because of the Vietnamese military victory — historic evidence of US decline — but also because an attack on Vietnam fits into Reagan's overall anti-Soviet containment strategy. Reagan/Haig are looking to demonstrate American military power. The targets are Afghanistan, Vietnam, El Salvador, and perhaps Angola/Namibia.

So when Haig went from Peking to a meeting of ASEAN in Manila it was Vietnam in his gunsights. A State Department official said the US "will seek, if we can, to find ways to increase the political, economic, and yes, military pressure on Vietnam" (*New York Times*, 18 June). Given the recent rise of attacks against the Vietnamese on their borders, the US/China war axis may

be planning another attempt at a "bloody lesson".

The 1979 invasion of Vietnam by China should have been a watershed for Maoists who had been born into political life as supporters of the Viet Cong against US imperialism. But those pseudo-leftists who didn't back China outright wailed over the spectacle of two "socialist countries" at war with each other. At the time the Spartacist League emphasized that China was acting de facto with US complicity, demanding "China Don't Be Cat's Paw for U.S. Imperialism", and calling on the Soviet Union to honor its treaty with Vietnam. Now the overt US/China alliance has confirmed that analysis. Thus a future attempt to "teach Vietnam a bloody lesson" will more likely be a combined imperialist and Chinese attack on a deformed workers state, part of a wider US military thrust against the Soviet Union.

If Vietnam is the immediate target, it is Poland which casts the darkest shadow over the China arms deal. The precise military results for China cannot be known until the weapons are actually in Peking's hands. But the announcement was intended as a *political* provocation precisely calculated and of global proportion.

Consider the timing and effect of the announcement. Since April when Caspar Weinberger spoke about the "linkage" between China arms sales and a possible Russian invasion of Poland, US liberals have talked about holding up arms to China as a "deterrent" and "bargaining chip" with the Soviets. That is why [ex-Secretary of State Cyrus] Vance is screaming about the China arms deal as playing all the US' China high cards in "no trump". He means that now the US has nothing more to offer the Soviets in the way of a deal.

But he mistakes the Reagan purpose completely, which is not to deter the Russians, but to *provoke them*. The announcement is thus finely tuned and calculated to *urge the Russians toward an invasion of Poland*. Reagan and Haig want nothing more than to see Russian tanks roll into Warsaw and Gdansk. They want to see the Russians dragged into a massive bloodbath in Poland while their troops are tied down at the Chinese border. So go ahead, says Reagan. There is no SALT. No bargains over Chinese guns. Nothing.

Reagan's goading of Russia over China is part of a strategy of global confrontation. He is now talking openly of the "end" of Communism, while pushing for nuclear end-game. Against the background of the China arms deal, multimillion-dollar weapons packages for Pakistan ("non-proliferation" be damned), the Rapid Deployment Force, the build-up of strategic and conventional forces in Europe and a projected trillion-dollar war budget, Reagan made the general case. "Communism", he said, is an "aberration . . . not a normal way of living for human beings". We are seeing "the beginning of the end" (*Washington Post*, 19 June).

While the talks were going on in China, Reagan spoke of Poland as the "first beginning cracks" in Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. The comment was supposed to be "off the cuff", but it was quite calculated. As bourgeois Russia-expert Hedrick Smith wrote in the *New York Times* (18 June): "That kind of remark from an American official is likely to harden the Kremlin's resolve to curb the movement for liberalization in Poland and possibly push ahead with military intervention despite the upheaval that is likely to ensue." When liberals like Cyrus Vance wail that Reagan has misplayed his foreign policy hand, that he has too early and too provocatively "played the China card", they assume that he is engaged in a game of diplomatic pressure tactics. In fact it is a big step toward war.

Defend the Soviet Union!

Where does the US anti-Communist war strategy leave its "Chicom" ally? "You can't say that China will be

Marxist forever", an American official recently told nervous Southeast Asian ministers at Manila. Indeed, any "security" China imagines it can purchase with a US military alliance will backfire. American imperialism is hostile to the expropriation of capitalism *everywhere*. The Reagan government particularly is anxious to see the eventual restoration of capitalism in China. And their handling of the issue of Taiwan is the tip-off.

The "sellout of Taiwan" has long been a hot issue between US bourgeois liberals and the far right. So far the Reagan administration, sensitive to the Taiwan issue with its natural constituency, and Deng & Co who for internal political reasons cannot appear to be "soft on Taiwan" have submerged the issue of Taiwan to their overriding anti-Sovietism. Despite wrangling among US liberals and conservatives, the anti-Soviet war drive is a bipartisan consensus in the bourgeoisie. The US/China axis was developed steadily from Nixon/Kissinger through Carter/Brzezinski to Reagan/Haig.

This administration remembers the maps from the 1950s with rings of containment around the USSR and they are out to make it real. From Japan, through Asia and the Middle East and into Europe, Reagan is surrounding Russia with firepower meant to contain, isolate and ultimately destroy the USSR. In this conflict there can be no neutrals. Trotskyists unconditionally defend against imperialism the Soviet bureaucratically degenerated workers state and the remaining social/economic conquests of the October Revolution!

In 1969, the SL noted the "objective possibility — given the tremendous industrial and military capacity of the Soviet Union — of a US deal with China" ("Development and Tactics of the Spartacist League"). All of the Stalinist bureaucracies, whether Russian, Chinese — Mao or Deng — or Vietnamese share the anti-international conception of "socialism in one country". In its name they stab one another in the back seeking deals with imperialism for illusory national "advantages". The Russian Stalinist bureaucracy is one of the most conciliatory outfits imaginable. But there are limits, as Hitler found out.

Socialist revolution in the capitalist West is indispensable in order to destroy imperialist militarism — and to sweep away the Haigs, Weinbergers and Reagans who would incinerate the world in their anti-Soviet crusade. And in the degenerated/deformed workers states not simply economic advancement but survival itself demands that the workers, led by a Trotskyist vanguard party, oust the Stalinist betrayers who bind them to the class enemy. As the US/China war axis threatens to turn the Cold War nuclear hot, one had better believe that the very existence of the planet depends on this. ■

Centrism and the TILC

Three articles on international anti-Spartacist regroupment, the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee, complementing analysis in this issue. Deals with TILC affiliates in US and Europe.

- * "Centrists in Quicksand" — *Workers Vanguard* no 287, 14 August 1981
- * "RWG: A cult for scabbing" — *Workers Vanguard* no 269, 28 November 1980
- * "The anti-Spartacists" — *Spartacist* no 29, Summer 1980

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Socialist Fight Joins International

Anti-Spartacist Bloc

The tiny centrist grouplet around Melbourne gadfly Paul White, after six months of publishing the monthly *Socialist Fight* (SF), unveiled its international connections at its first public meeting on August 25. Stephen Corbishley of the British International-Communist League (I-CL), White's political mentors, spoke on his group's entry work in the British Labour Party (BLP). The I-CL has recently fused with another small British centrist group, Alan Thornett's Workers Socialist League (WSL), on the basis of the latter's rightward-moving liquidation into the I-CL entrist front, the Socialist Organiser Alliance (SOA) (see accompanying article, "End of the British WSL").

Along with the rump of the WSL, the I-CL has acquired its fake-international bloc, the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee (TILC). Thereupon SF (no 6, August-September) promptly announced it had joined TILC too, hoping some ceremonial international ties would give it a selling point. The chief defining character of TILC has always been anti-Spartacism. Its origins date from 1979 when it was set up by the WSL as a holding pen for several homeless centrist groups united by hostility to the international Spartacist tendency and frozen out of the larger international fake-Trotskyist groupings, the United Secretariat and the Lambert/Moreno "Parity Committee". Like the other members of this rotten bloc, White joined with a string of disagreements as long as his arm (Kampuchea, the nature of the Stalinist parties, Pabloism and the degeneration of the Fourth International) while agreeing on vague generalities such as "the method and political essence of the Transitional Program is still valid". Like the I-CL, which was prematurely labelled reformist in *Australasian Spartacist* no 83 (April 1981), the SF group is still right-centrist, but only just.

Standing between the Trotskyism of the Spartacist League and the social-democratic Socialist Workers Party and International Socialist groups, SF's politics are characterised by extreme Stalinophobia on the Russian question, programless rank-and-filism in the

unions as exemplified by White's activities in the reform group of the Victorian Administrative and Clerical Officers Association (ACOA) and SF's attempt to pull together some influence in the Victorian ALP Socialist Left. SF no 6 announces a new "supporters group" composed "almost entirely of Labor Party members" with "varying levels of political agreement" who launched "an ongoing study program" while not "being expected to stand by all of SF's judgements". In other words, after years of getting nowhere in dead-end discussion circles minus program, White can only produce yet another discussion group.

Stalinophobia meets "democratic" imperialism

Virulent Stalinophobia is common to all the TILC affiliates. SF's application to affiliate swears agreement that "Stalinism is a thoroughly counterrevolutionary force" while saying nothing about defence of the USSR or any of the deformed workers states against imperialist attack. This is a third-camp position, equating the degenerated and deformed workers states with imperialism and liquidating the class basis for defencism. In Afghanistan, where the Red Army is fighting a progressive war against US-backed Islamic reactionaries, SF de-

mands they withdraw! In Poland the SF/I-CL criticises the clerical-nationalist leadership of Solidarity for failing to launch a "political revolution". In reality this is a program for counterrevolution. Its context is a US global strategy of provocations against the Soviets. Reagan/Haig want to provoke Soviet intervention into Polish civil life, they want a nationalist bloodbath — to further lay the political/military basis for their war plans. But not a word of this will you find in SF. White/SF's position that the Russian bureaucracy is "completely counterrevolutionary" and their Kautskyite fixation on classless democracy already ideologically places them squarely in the imperialist camp.

Right now, with cruise missiles and the neutron bomb in Britain and Europe, with the Chinese arms deal and the war bases in Australia and the Indian Ocean, it is US imperialism and its allies like Australia which are mobilising for war under the banner of "democracy" against the "totalitarian" Soviet Union. Their labour lieutenants are preparing the working class for war, binding it hand and foot to the bourgeoisie. And the anti-Soviet war drive has the reformist and centrist left running for cover like frightened rabbits — straight into the social democracy.

SF claims the keynote of the I-CL/WSL

fusion conference was that "... a working-class revolution can be made to occur in Britain in the period ahead of us", but Corbishley made it quite clear the SOA's real aim is a Tony Benn-led Labour parliamentary majority:

"I do want to emphasise ... that clearly at this stage, we are not talking about the formation of a workers government other than through the question of a majority of Parliament, being primarily identified with that of the Labour Party."

And this was the core of the perspectives Corbishley outlined. For Leninists the workers government is nothing but a popular agitational form for the dictatorship of the proletariat which can only come about when the bosses' state is smashed by and replaced with a government based on the workers own organisations. For Corbishley talk of a workers government is simply a centrist cover for tailing Tony Benn's campaign for leadership in the BLP. Benn's program is one of little-England protectionism, "non-nuclear" defence of British imperialism, and support for NATO forces in Europe, now being lined up for war against the Soviet Union. Like a used car salesman Corbishley urges revolutionaries to work for Benn in order to "identify" his campaign as "a battle for ideas different to those of the pro-capitalist elements!"

As an SL supporter noted at the forum, "No doubt the workers government is going to come to power and duly take its place in her majesty's parliament. There is a need in Britain for a hard break with pathetic, cringing Labour-loyalism and parliamentary cretinism that has been so deeply ingrained in the British left, and that has been so well displayed here tonight."

But with this White and SF feel completely at home. Their strategy of "democratising" the ALP lacks only a viable analogue to Benn for them to follow the I-CL/WSL course and liquidate completely into the social democracy.

However the chicken feathers really flew when a speaker from the Spartacist League took up the well-known scabbing of the TILC's "workers leader", Alan Thornett, the leader of the WSL. In 1979 Thornett fought against those who wanted to honour the national engineer-

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British capital's proven Labour lieutenants Callaghan, Healey and Benn.

End of the British WSL

"Now the Labour Party supporters of Socialist Press have decided to add their forces to those already grouped around Socialist Organiser."

—*Socialist Organiser*, 30 May

Thus read Sean Matgamna's rather gloating obituary for the Workers Socialist League (WSL) of Alan Thornett. Six years after its appearance on the British political landscape as a self-described "orthodox Trotskyist" alternative to the revisionist morass, the WSL is about to be swallowed by Matgamna's International-Communist League (I-CL) in a "fusion" inside the Socialist Organiser Alliance (SOA). Soon all that will remain of the WSL are several dozen more foot soldiers for "left" reformist Tony Benn, a reputation for scabbing by its principal leader among militant unionists at BL Cowley in Oxford, and a sizeable number of former cadres recruited to the Trotskyist programme of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt). And it looks like turning out to be the latter. The WSL is following a well-travelled path to join the I-CL in a fight to "renovate the labour movement" on a "roughly adequate" programme as an organic faction of the Labour Party.

This right-centrist regroupment is significant — but not, as its authors would like to claim, because it will demonstrate an alternative to "sectarianism" and augment the forces fighting to win Labour to "socialist policies". Rather it is a clear expression of the political forces acting upon ostensible revolutionaries in Britain today. It is a fusion fixed on the terrain of the Cold War and formalised at the altar of the social-democratic "broad church": anti-Soviet, pro-Labour. Imperialist hostility to the Soviet Union is today again the primary feature of world politics and again it is forcing those who lack the programmatic bearings to stand up to the pressure ever deeper into the bosom of the social democracy. In the case of this outfit, it is captured by such lurid *Daily Mail*-style newspaper headlines as "Russia Threatens Poland" (*Socialist Organiser*, 27 June) and by the fact that one leading Socialist Organiser supporter, Rachel Lever, is literally a member of Benn's election campaign committee. Indeed the Matgamna outfit has for the past year and a half explicitly theorised the possibility of an organic, peaceful road to socialism via a "left" Labour government

(a position now tacitly endorsed by the WSL). These are the political credentials of this lash-up.

When the WSL was founded in 1974, after tinpot dictator Gerry Healy had expelled Thornett and some 200 supporters from the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP), the new organisation exercised an attractive pull on the "far left". Thornett was a prominent BL Cowley shop steward and the WSL boasted of a predominantly proletarian composition. More importantly, to a large milieu of left-centrist cadres disillusioned with the "third campism" of the Cliffite International Socialists (IS), the impressionistic tailism of the IMG and the bizarre political banditry of the WRP (which was soon to take it out of the workers movement entirely) the WSL claimed to stand on Trotskyist principle. Within a year of its inception the ex-WRP core had been augmented by about a third of the Revolutionary Communist Group, several cadres from IS and a majority of the Trotskyist Opposition of the IMG. But for many of these cadres the WSL was to be a stepping stone on the road to genuine Trotskyism in the iSt.

Shortly after the WSL's formation the iSt offered the following tentative assessment of the organisation:

"At present the WSL is most clearly defined negatively, by its break from the Healyite organization in opposition to the WRP's sectarianism and brutally undemocratic internal regime. While its future programmatic course is not definitively predictable, the WSL's failure to develop the internal struggle against Healy much beyond the democracy issue, and its rejection of Healyite 'ultra-leftism' while maintaining some of the most rightist-revisionist aspects of the SLL/WRP, would seem to define the WSL as a split to the right from a badly deformed and characteristically English-centered version of fake 'Trotskyism.'"

— "After Healy, What? WSL Adrift", *Workers Vanguard* no 69, 23 May 1975

The centrism of the WSL continued to be defined primarily negatively, but thereafter in reaction to the Trotskyist challenge posed by the Spartacist tendency. Indeed the rightist "fusion" taking place this month is the end-product of a process of political clarification imposed upon the WSL by the iSt through a series of splits to the left...

Continued on page six

Tens of thousands march through Lodz protesting food shortages. A column of 200 buses and trucks occupies central Warsaw for three days, its organizers demanding that the government reverse a cut of 20 percent in the meat ration. Yet even Solidarity spokesmen admit the ration cut is necessitated by actual shortages. There is no meat, or soap, or cigarettes. And now the government plans price increases of 100-300 percent on basic consumer goods. How long can things go on like this?

Since last summer's general strike gave rise to a powerful new union movement, *Solidarnosc*, Poland has been in a state of cold dual power. As Solidarity and the weakened regime have gone from confrontation to confrontation, pulling back at the last minute, the country has descended into economic chaos. Partly, people have stopped working since the zlotys they earn no longer buy anything. But at bottom the general collapse of work discipline is political. The official "Communist" system (actually Stalinist bureaucratic rule) is hopelessly discredited. No one believes it is possible to turn the calendar back before August 1980. At the same time, no one knows what will happen tomorrow — there is no longer any positive goal to work for.

No significant force in Poland is fighting for a socialist solution to the crisis. Rather, the prolonged social crisis has generated a deeply anarchic spirit fueled by nationalistic resentment. The "hunger marches" have lost all sense that to have even chicken in the shops, someone must raise them, butcher them, pluck them and transport them. In order to eat, one must work! Instead they seem to believe that by demonstrating vociferously, cursing the bureaucracy, bemoaning the historic plight of the Polish nation, denouncing Maria Theresa, lamenting the First, Second and Third Partitions and blaming Russia for the Katyn Forest massacre, meat will somehow appear in the shops. Perhaps they think that if they make enough trouble, the Russians to pacify them will once more come through with shipments of poultry from their own collective farms, where feed grain is spread by elderly widows of Red Army soldiers killed while liberating Poland from Nazi Germany.

The regime, possibly stiffened by the inclusion of two more generals, has warned that the self-styled "hunger marches" (no one is starving) could lead to "an explosion of national conflict". And they

Poland?" (*Workers Vanguard* no 279, 24 April):

"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."

Roots of Poland's great depression

Poland is experiencing an economic collapse in its own way comparable to the capitalist world's Great Depression of the 1930s. The official forecast is that national output will fall 15 percent this year on top of a 4 percent drop in 1980 and a 2.5 percent decline the year before. How can this happen in a planned socialized economy?

The direct origins of the economic crisis lie in the attempt of the bureaucracy under Edward Gierek to buy off the combative working class in the wake of the violent 1970 Baltic Coast uprising. Promising unparalleled prosperity, Gierek went on an unparalleled importing binge. Entire factories and sophisticated capital equipment were purchased from the West on a massive scale, as were finished consumer goods. The Gierek regime expected, or at any rate hoped, to pay for all this by producing a flood of cheap manufactured exports. These hopes were, to put it mildly, unfulfilled. Between 1971 and 1975 the import bill was *double* export earnings and by 1976 Stalinist Poland was into the bankers of Frankfurt and Wall Street for over \$10 billion.

The Gierek regime mortgaged the Polish economy not only to Western finance capital but also to its own rural petty capitalists. While freezing food prices for urban consumers, the government raised procurement prices paid to the landowning peasants. As a result the food subsidy increased *twenty times* in the 1970s and now accounts for 70 percent of the price paid to farmers. Private peasants receive 14 zlotys for a liter of milk, which is sold to consumers in the shops for 2.90 zlotys. Despite the additional incentives Poland's aging, inefficient smallholders cannot produce nearly enough to meet the increased consumer demand. And despite the Stalinists' conciliatory policies the rural petty bourgeoisie remains deeply anti-

Economic Chaos Engulfs Poland

Proletarian Politics will put Peop

The workers responded with violent strikes and demonstrations and within 24 hours the price increases were rescinded. Instead, to save scarce foreign exchange, the government cut back imports of raw materials and intermediate goods, while maintaining a high level of imports of meat, other foodstuffs and finished consumer goods (including Sony TV sets)! In the late 1970s Poland consumed annually 70 kilos of meat per capita, more than Italy or Spain. At the same time, many factories couldn't fulfill their plan due to shortages of necessary foreign-produced inputs.

Contributing to the growing crisis was a disintegration of labor discipline,

Europe: The Polish Case" in US Congress, Joint Economic Committee, *East European Economic Assessment* [1981]).

The foreign exchange shortage did not spare agriculture as the government cut back pesticide imports and couldn't supply spare parts for Western-made farm machinery. The peasants too sensed the post-'76 weakness of the Gierek regime and agitated for higher procurement prices, cheaper inputs and other benefits. In 1979, priest-led peasant strikes combined with bad weather to reduce the grain crop below its 1976 level. With a time lag the feed grain shortfall has ravaged the livestock herds. In the past half year the number of cattle has reportedly decreased 7 percent and the number of pigs 13 percent (*Economist*, 1 August).

To maintain social peace in its important military ally, the Soviet Union has continually paid off Poland's Western creditors. Despite this the Polish economy was sinking under the weight of massive foreign debt and increasing internal unrest.

Solidarity and cold dual power

Last summer the Gierek regime made yet another desperate attempt to get Poland to live within its means. For the third time in a decade the bureaucracy tried to raise food prices. The result is a crisis that could alter the postwar world.

A series of localized wage strikes culminated in a well-organized political general strike which shut down the Baltic Coast for two weeks. To prevent the strike from spreading throughout Poland, the regime recognized the right to independent trade unions, the first time this has ever happened in a Stalinist-ruled state. Within months of the August 31 Gdansk agreement the new union movement embraced practically the entire Polish working class, including one million members of the Communist party. The depth of the social transformation is indicated by Polish sociologist Stefan Nowak: "The speed with which 10 million Poles assembled in the Solidarity movement testifies to the strength of the needs the movement serves" ("Values and Attitudes of the Polish People", *Scientific American*, July 1981). Nowak observes that "skilled workers are now the main social force in Poland".

Yet while having a committed mass proletarian base, the new union move-



Shopping in Poland: no meat, no soap, no cigarettes. In order to eat one must work.

could indeed. In Warsaw on August 3 for the first time police blocked a Solidarity demonstration, preventing it from marching past Communist Party headquarters. And looming over the crisis since the beginning is the possibility of Soviet military intervention, a course evidently viewed by the Kremlin with great reluctance. But regardless of the subjective intentions of the Kremlin, the Warsaw Stalinists and the Solidarity leadership, economic chaos is driving Poland back to the brink. As we wrote in "Whose

communist and under the sway of clerical reaction. Its basic social attitude was recently summed up by British journalist Tim Garton Ash: "It is the conservative Catholic peasants of South-Eastern Poland who would overthrow communism at the drop of Cardinal's hat" (*Spectator*, 14 February 1981).

In June 1976 the Gierek regime made an effort to get out of the economic hole it had dug for itself. To free up agricultural produce for export, it announced a food price increase averaging 60 percent.

a reaction to Gierek's spectacular loss of credibility over the June '76 events. When the government told workers to tighten their belts, they responded by voting with their productivity and the vote was no confidence. An American diplomat in Poland in the late 1970s recalls: "A plant manager once told me it was difficult for him to tell whether it was simply a normal work-day in the factory or whether the workers were engaged in a slow-down or working to rule" (RT Davis, "Political-Economic Dynamics in Eastern



Political Revolution People to Work

ment has from its inception been led by pro-clerical/nationalist forces hostile to the Soviet Union and sympathetic to the capitalist "free world". Lech Walesa and his colleagues see themselves leading the entire Polish nation against "Russian-imposed Communism". This is most graphically expressed by their fulsome support to the peasant smallholders organization, Rural Solidarity. Thus, the danger is real that the Polish crisis could enormously strengthen capitalist-restorationist forces. And with the political strength of the Catholic church, now headed by a Polish pope, the danger of counterrevolution is not at all abstract.

Since the Gdansk agreement we have maintained that the central task of a revolutionary (Trotskyist) vanguard in Poland would be to *polarize* the new union movement, winning the majority of workers away from the anti-Soviet nationalistic leadership around Walesa. Trotskyists would fight within Solidarity for a program centering on the strict separation of church and state, unconditional military defense of the Soviet bloc against capitalism-imperialism, a political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy and establishment of a government based on democratically elected workers councils (soviets), to

carry out socialist economic planning (including the collectivization of agriculture). This program offers a socialist way out of the desperate and seemingly endless crises wracking Poland.

The Stalinist bureaucracy is not a class but a caste which rules through the monopolization of political organization. Whatever the pious statements of the beleaguered Warsaw regime, it cannot coexist with an independent union movement, much less one with the elemental social force of Solidarity. Kania, Rakowski & Co have just bought some time for themselves at the price of economic chaos.

Under pressure from Solidarity, the government has raised wages over 20 percent while production has dropped through the floor, in good part due to the introduction of the five-day workweek in January. The output of coal, the main export commodity, has fallen 20 percent in the last year and barely meets domestic requirements. The agricultural situation is, if anything, worse. Meat supplies are down 20 percent. The 1980 potato harvest was cut in half, sugar beet production by one quarter. To adjust demand to supply the regime has announced it is increasing the price of food and other necessities on average by 110 percent (!) while freezing wages. Poland is an extreme case of suppressed inflation about to become an extreme case of unsuppressed inflation.

The drastic cut in production and consumption has not eased the balance-of-payments deficits. On the contrary, since the Gdansk agreement Poland's hard-currency debt has jumped from \$21 to \$27 billion. The Polish Stalinists have responded to the crisis by becoming yet more dependent on Western finance capital. Meanwhile, they have relied on the Kremlin to bail them out — to the tune of \$4.5 billion in bilateral and hard currency credits since last summer's strikes.

They are also moving toward greater dependence on their own petty capitalists. The new five-year plan (in itself a truly pollyannaish act of optimism) calls for increasing the share of agriculture in investment from 15 to 25 percent of which three-fourths will go to private farms (*Economist*, 11 July). In other words, almost 20 percent of all state investment funds are to be placed in the hands of the landowning peasantry, considerably strengthening the social basis for counterrevolution. But one needn't give

this particular bureaucratic five-year plan much credence. The showdown in Poland is coming long before then and will be decided by very different forces.

A workers Poland, yes!

The deepening anarchy in Poland and the imminence of violent clashes between Solidarity and the regime could bring Russian soldiers into the streets of Lodz and Warsaw to restore bureaucratic order. No doubt the Stalinists' justification would be the need to "combat counterrevolution". Certainly there are sizable forces for the restoration of capitalism, from the landowning peasantry to the Catholic church. Yet it is the main counterrevolutionary force in the world, US imperialism, that is trying to provoke the Kremlin over Poland. Reagan/Haig want to see Polish workers throwing Molotov cocktails at Russian tanks in order to fuel their anti-Soviet war drive.

At best, Soviet military intervention would freeze the political differentiation within the working class necessary for the only progressive solution of the Polish crisis: proletarian political revolution. At a minimum it would postpone the decisive confrontation between the workers and their Stalinist rulers. But it could do far worse. It could spark violent resistance by the Poles, leading to a bloodbath that would crush the working class into the ground politically and produce an explosion of anti-Russian nationalism that would take years, perhaps decades to overcome. This would be not merely a defeat for the socialist movement but a historic catastrophe.

Solidarity's opposition to a centrally planned economy (expressed in calls for "self-managed enterprises" — see accompanying article) and its "hunger marches" both express the anarchy which has engulfed the country. Poland does not need anarchy — it needs a socialist order. If ever there was a crying need for socialist economic planning, it is Poland today. But socialist economic planning is possible only under the leadership of an authentically revolutionary workers party. And this requires the ouster of the Stalinist bureaucracy which undermines socialized property. Polish workers and the international proletariat *must defend*

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"Market Socialism" is Anti-Socialist

While Solidarity leader Lech Walesa's favorite posture is that of a simple trade unionist, bread-and-butter trade unionism is impossible in Poland today. There is no bread and butter. At the time of the Gdansk agreement last summer we wrote: "The present large wage increases now being granted will lead either to wild inflation or even longer waiting lines" ("Polish Workers Move", *Australasian Spartacist* no 77, September 1980). By now practically every member of Solidarity must know that demanding and getting higher money wages and shorter hours only makes the economic condition worse. The *Solidarnosc* leadership is under pressure from their most responsible members, as well as sympathetic intellectuals and bureaucrats, to come up with some positive program to get out of the economic crisis.

Solidarity's numerous leftist lawyers in the West, like Ernest Mandel's fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat, keep arguing that its leaders have never actually called for the restoration of capitalism, though they almost never say anything good about a socialized economy. In point of fact, Walesa has praised American economic imperialism and called for its greater penetration into Poland. When asked by the liberal West German *Der Spiegel* (15 June)

where would the investment funds come from to restructure the Polish economy, the Solidarity chief replied: "...perhaps from the West in the form of joint companies. I have seen for myself on my Japanese trip how strongly American capital has contributed to Japan's enormous economic ascent."

Solidarity's most comprehensive and authoritative statement of economic program to date is a document, "The Course of Union Action in the Country's Present Situation", published in the 17 April *Solidarity Weekly* (translated in *Intercontinental Press*, 22 and 29 June). This document advocates an extreme version of "the Yugoslav model", calling for autonomous enterprises based on workers self-management:

"...they [the self-management bodies] should have the right to exercise control over the assets of the concern, to decide on the aims of production and sales, the choice of production methods, and investment goals. They should also decide on the distribution of the profits of the enterprise."

The document further specifies that "concerns should be self-financing, that is, they should be able to cover their costs out of their own earnings".

One doesn't know whether the Solidarity leadership is seriously committed to the Yugoslav model or is simply setting

on paper the conventional formulae for liberal economic reform in East Europe. What is clear, however, is that if realized, the Solidarity program would be an even greater catastrophe for the Polish working class than that brought about by the Stalinists' incredible mismanagement and ever greater concessions to bourgeois forces.

With the Polish economy on the downhill side of a roller coaster ride, free-market competition and self-financing would immediately bankrupt hundreds of enterprises throwing hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of workers into the streets. Significantly, the only group of Polish workers which actually seems to be pushing for self-management are the employees of the national airline, LOT, a state *monopoly*. The authors of the Solidarity program are realistic enough to know that theirs is a recipe for instant mass layoffs:

"The union recognizes that the enterprises will have the right to make changes in their employment levels as they need to. But the government authorities will still be responsible for carrying out a full employment policy... The self-financing of enterprises may also result in some having to cut back or close down."

So the self-managers are to be free to lay off workers at will and somehow the government has to find ways to re-

employ them all! Just like it is supposed to find food when there isn't any. Here Solidarity's scheme is far worse — more ruthlessly capitalistic — than Yugoslav practice. In Yugoslavia enterprises are prohibited from dismissing a worker for economic reasons without securing "equivalent substitute employment" for him. But under Solidarity's plan the majority of "self-managers" can get rid of the workers in an unprofitable or marginal department in order to bolster their own income. Solidarity indeed!

Inequality and unemployment

Socialism means a democratically administered, planned, egalitarian and internationally organized economy. Before the rise of Stalinism practically no one who considered himself a socialist disputed these basic principles. The program of "market socialism" has nothing in common with socialism. It is basically a product of liberal Stalinism....

We can judge the effects of "market socialism" from life itself. Autonomous enterprises under workers self-management were introduced to the world by Tito's Yugoslavia shortly after the break with Stalin in 1948. Workers

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Soon after the establishment of the London Spartacist Group, we wrote a letter to the WSL leadership in reply to its "International Perspectives" document, noting (*inter alia*) its "unwillingness to break from and confront the influence and strength of the Labour Party reformists". From its inception the WSL had adopted the slogan "Make the lefts fight" from the arsenal of late 1960s Healyism. And while the early *Socialist Press* made sharp denunciations of the betrayals of the "lefts", and categorically refused to support Tony Benn's campaign for the Labour leadership after Harold Wilson's resignation, its strategy remained one of pressuring the "left" Labourites. When a number of WSL cadres, rebelling against Thornett's refusal to openly confront the political questions posed by the Spartacist tendency, moved into opposition to form the Trotskyist Faction (TF) in 1977, they took up opposition to Labourism as a central aspect of their fight. In its faction declaration, "In Defence of the Revolutionary Programme", the TF stated:

"Rather than offering an alternative to the betrayals of the right, the 'Make the Lefts Fight' slogan only serves to lend our authority to the 'left-wing' credentials of the thoroughly rotten counter-revolutionary parliamentary cretins in the Tribune group and thus serves to tie the political development of the working class to a wing of social democracy."

— reprinted in *Spartacist Britain* no 1, April 1978

The WSL's Labour loyalism led, after much confusion, to its call for a vote to workers parties standing in popular-frontist coalitions, a particularly burning question given the Liberal-Labour pact signed earlier that year. In the course of the TF struggle, the WSL also came down with a hard position of tailing Green nationalism in Ireland in reaction to the fact that three out of the four members of its Irish Commission had been won to the iSt's class perspective on the question. By the time the struggle was over, Thornett had lost one-fifth of his entire membership, who went on to fuse with the London Spartacist Group and found the Spartacist League/Britain.

Two years later, Thornett lost another sizeable chunk of his central leadership including three National Committee members, when he expelled the Leninist Faction in early 1980. Impelled towards the iSt particularly by the WSL's tailing of clerical reaction in Iran and its pursuit of unprincipled manoeuvres with Pabloists and virtually everyone else in the so-called "world Trotskyist movement", these cadres stated point blank that the fight for Trotskyism meant a fight against centrism in the WSL. In the course of that fight, Thornett demonstrated the end logic of his "mass work" fakery and tailing backward trade-union consciousness — by **scabbing** on a national engineering strike. Indeed as we said previously in projecting the present "fusion":

"It all conjures up the classic social-democratic 'division of labour' between the political and industrial wings: Matgamna could run the footslogging for Labour while Thornett runs the scabbing in the unions."

— *Spartacist Britain* no 28, November 1980/January 1981

The WSL comes to the end of the line politically degenerate, organisationally traumatised, a demoralised, rightist rump hoping for a new lease on life in the Labour Party. It is safe to project that in this horse-and-rider combination, it is Matgamna, one of the slickest operators on the centrist left, who will be the rider. But Matgamna the manoeuvrer has also undergone a political degeneration in recent years. From attempting to carve out a niche somewhere to the left of the IMG, he has gone on to seek a niche inside Benn's electoral apparatus. He may succeed — but at the price of any pretence to revolutionary politics. If *Spartacist Britain* was somewhat premature in characterising this right-centrist as having completed the journey to reformism (see "NATO 'International-

ists', Little England Socialists", *Spartacist Britain* no 30, March 1981), it must nonetheless be clear that liquidationist Labour-entrism is the political graveyard of many a clever centrist.

There is an alternative: a complete break with all varieties of centrism and serious examination of the politics of the iSt. That was the road followed by the TF and LF from the WSL, and now by the expelled comrades of the CF from the IMG. That is the only way forward for those supporters of the soon-to-be Socialist Organiser Alliance who would rather not wait until their August 4th creeps up on them. For the rebirth of the Fourth International!

— abridged from *Spartacist Britain* no 34, July 1981

Socialist Fight...

Continued from page three

ing strike at the British Leyland Cowley assembly plant where he is a deputy union convenor, for fear of losing his (and the WSL's trade-union allies') trade union posts (see *Spartacist Britain* no 15, October 1979). Thornett's scabbing is just the final proof that the centrist search for "influence" in the unions without a class-struggle programmatic foundation leads straight to the strikebreaking program of the trade-union bureaucracy. Predictably Corbishley's reply, while refusing to defend Thornett's actions, singled out for attack the Spartacist tendency's insistence, reasserting basic trade-unionism, that picket lines mean don't cross.

"There are times comrades, when it is actually necessary, I am going to say this, yes ... that comrade may be going in to fight and defend that strike, organise strike support work, yes, it is quite feasible to do it."

There is no such thing as crossing picket lines to *defend* a strike. As an SL supporter put it, "Thornett apparently scabbed to help the workers movement; he didn't scab to attack it, so it's alright. How is he going to tell those other workers inside the plant not to cross picket lines if he's just done it?!" There was no reply.

TILC: International pro-scabbing society

Corbishley omitted all mention of another recent "fusion" in the United States, that of the Ann Arbor/Detroit-based Revolutionary Workers League cult around Peter Sollenberger, and the tiny San Francisco-based TILC affiliate, the Socialist League (Democratic-Centralist). The US TILC lash-up is massive confirmation that what TILC is building is a home for "socialists" who justify scabbing. The Sollenberger cult has written more in defence of scabbing than on any other subject. And they practice what they preach. (For the full background to these groups, see the *Workers Vanguard* articles, "Centrists in Quicksand" and "RWG: A Cult for Scabbing", advertised in this issue.)

And *Socialist Fight*? White himself urged his supporters to cross the picket lines of a number of unions, including metal trades, at a strike at the Melbourne Government Aircraft factory in 1980. With some gall White raised this incident at the forum — to accuse the SL and a former White supporter recruited to the SL and broken from White's strike-breaking position — of being scabs! As that comrade pointed out "scabbing is Paul White's politics, because he was the one saying you've got to cross, you've got to cross".

Centrists like Paul White and the TILC, despite myriads of differences, tend in the same direction: social-democratic loyalism, virulent anti-Sovietism, defence of all forms of opportunism and rationalisations for scabbing. As Corbishley noted everywhere internationally the Spartacist tendency has "one opinion". Yes, we speak as one, with the same program and with irreconcilable hostility to centrists, reformists and social democrats who are also everywhere the

same. There is only *one* program for world revolution, and Matgamna, Thornett and White *fight against it*. As the SL speaker at Corbishley's forum concluded,

"Trotskyists don't cross picket lines; Trotskyists are for the unconditional defence of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack; and in the labour movement Trotskyists advance the struggle for a class-struggle leadership to oust the labour bureaucrats and to split the social-democratic parties from their reformist, pro-capitalist leadership, and to build a Bolshevik party. And I'm saying anybody here interested in Trotskyist politics should talk to the Spartacist League, because what you're going to get from these people is scabbing and anti Soviet defencism. That is the common denominator of the TILC." ■

Poland...

Continued from page seven

the revolutionary conquests that made it possible for Poland to build out of the rural backwardness of the East European plains the tenth largest industrial country in the world!

There can be no thought of a working-class solution to the economic crisis without the *collectivization of agriculture* and the *cancellation of the imperialist debt*. Yet both these programs are directly counter to the clerical-nationalism of the Solidarity leadership. Solidarity's solidarity of the Polish nation causes it to champion the organized peasant smallholders, even as they drive up food prices while reducing supplies. The cancellation of the capitalist debt would be met with reprisals, economic and political. A revolutionary workers government would counter such imperialist retaliation by appealing to the West European working class to become comrades in a new venture, the Socialist United States of Europe. Such an appeal is not merely inconceivable to Walesa and his colleagues, it goes against their entire political outlook.

The notion of "socialism in one country" — with or without workers self-management — is a Stalinist ideological fantasy. Certainly there can be no "independent, socialist Poland" somehow unaffected by the drive of capitalism-imperialism to destroy the Soviet Union. A socialist future for Poland depends on the revolutionary unity of Polish and Russian workers, a unity directed against the Stalinist bureaucracy whose decades-long capitulation to bourgeois forces is responsible for the present disastrous situation. Poland urgently requires an ambitious economic plan to restructure industry and bring about a technological revolution in agriculture, based on the collectivized economy of proletarian state power. A workers political revolution throughout Stalinist-ruled East Europe, led by Trotskyist parties, would inspire the enthusiasm, self-sacrifice and work discipline to put Poland back to work — and open the road to socialism.

— reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 287, 14 August 1981

Market Socialism...

Continued from page seven

councils elect the management and control after-tax revenues. Enterprises are, however, subject to certain decisive restrictions which still define them as state, not group, property. Enterprises cannot liquidate themselves or sell off their physical plant without government approval. Workers have a share in enterprise profits only so long as they are employed there; they have no property rights *per se*...

"Market socialism" by its very nature generates increased income inequalities and unemployment. Moreover, the profitability or unprofitability of a concern is usually only marginally affected by the diligence of its workforce. In general the most important factor determining the

difference between selling price and cost is the relative *age* of the plant. Under "market socialism" workers unfortunately stuck in older enterprises are penalized with lower incomes than their fellow workers employed in new or newly retooled plants. The second major factor governing enterprise profitability is supply and demand conditions on the domestic and/or world market, again something the workers have no control over. Under Solidarity's scheme Polish coal miners, for example, would benefit when OPEC pushed up the price of oil, thereby increasing demand for coal, and suffer when the world oil market was in glut (as at present). "Market socialism" violates the elementary principle, shared by trade unionists as well as socialists, of equal pay for equal work...

After three decades of workers self-management Yugoslavia suffers the *highest rate of inflation in Europe*, East or West, a 14 percent unemployment rate and gross inequalities throughout economic life. The unemployment rate would be far higher still except that the authorities routinely bail out enterprises in financial trouble at the cost of feeding an inflation rate which is now running 50 percent a year (*Economist*, 1 August)! And meanwhile they send their "surplus" sons and daughters to work in capitalist West Europe: remittances from Yugoslavs abroad amount to over half the total value of goods exported.

Inter-enterprise competition combined with federalism has in fact *widened* regional differences, thereby aggravating national conflicts which could rip the country apart. Yugoslavia's most advanced republic, Slovenia, enjoys economic conditions comparable to neighboring Austria's, while Albanian-populated Kosovo more closely resembles Turkey. Moreover, the gap between the richest and poorest regions has increased under "market socialism". In 1952 per capita income in Kosovo was 23 percent of that in Slovenia; by 1977 it was only 15 percent (Laura D'Andrea Tyson and Gabriel Eichler, "Continuity and Change in the Yugoslav Economy in the 1970's and 1980's", in *East European Economic Assessment*)...

While the Soviet Union is far from free of national conflicts and Great Russian chauvinism, centralized planning has enabled it to appreciably *narrow* the once vast gulf between the wretchedly backward peoples of Central Asia and those of European Russia. The liberal British economist Alec Nove, no admirer of the Soviet economic system, acknowledges: "The wage rates in Central Asia are similar to those in Central Russia, the prices of cotton, citrus fruits, grapes, tobacco, have been relatively favourable, the social services provided in Central Asia have been on the standard 'Soviet' scale, and budget statistics show that additional sums are earmarked for the budgets of backward republics" (*The Soviet Economic System* [1977]). To be sure, a workers government in the Soviet Union would overcome the still great inequalities fostered by the parasitic Kremlin bureaucracy, for example, by encouraging migration from the over-populated Central Asian republics to the labor-short regions of Russia and Siberia.

The Trotskyist answer to bureaucratic centralism

Solidarity's advocacy of enterprise self-management expresses the influence

Revolutionary Literature

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of liberal Stalinist and social-democratic intellectuals on the one hand and possibly primitive syndicalist impulses on the other. It also reflects nationalistic rejection of "Russian Communism". In the Yugoslav and Hungarian deformed workers states the tendency of enterprise autonomy to regenerate capitalistic economic relations is circumscribed and checked by a still strong governmental apparatus. But in the anarchic conditions of Poland, self-managed enterprises could free themselves from all but nominal state control.

If carried out, Solidarity's program would add mass unemployment to the miseries afflicting the Polish workers, would facilitate imperialist economic penetration and would strengthen the forces pushing for capitalist restoration. Capitalist restoration would mean bloody counterrevolution, not a peaceful, gradual, purely economic process. But any market-oriented "reforms", further atomizing the Polish economy, can only increase the counterrevolutionary danger....

As Trotsky noted in 1932, at the height of Stalin's economic adventurism, only the interaction of workers democracy, the plan and the market can guide the economy through the transitional epoch from capitalism to communism:

"The participation of workers themselves in the leadership of the nation, of its policies and economy; an actual control over the bureaucracy; and the growth in the feeling of responsibility of those in charge to those under them — all these would doubtless react favorably on production itself: the friction would be reduced, the costly economic zigzags would likewise be reduced to a minimum, a healthier distribution of forces and equipment would be assured, and ultimately the coefficients of growth would be raised. Soviet democracy is first of all the vital need of national economy itself."

— *What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat*

This is the goal of Trotskyists' call for proletarian political revolution in the bureaucratically degenerated/deformed workers states: not backward to the anarchy of the market with its inflation and unemployment, its national chauvinism and imperialist war, but forward to socialism through an international planned economy based on soviet democracy.

— abridged from *Workers Vanguard* no 287, 14 August 1981

Interview...

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Remember: the 1977 massacres in Jaffna were also carried out under the bloody Mrs B!

The iSt and the newly-formed Spartacist League/Lanka (see *Spartacist* no 31-32, Summer 1981) stand for the right of the Tamil national minority to self-determination, ie the right to a separate state. But we have argued against such a resolution of the conflict, pointing to the enormous misery which partition would cause for the over one million stateless Tamil plantation work-

ers. These estate workers would face the grim choices of remaining in the concentration camp plantations, migrating to refugee camps in the economically barren "Tamil Eelam" or destitution in a foreign India.

Our road is the road of united Sinhala/Tamil class struggle. If the communal divisions on the island become unbridgeable, then secession may become the only means to open the way for revolutionary class struggle. But what is needed is a Trotskyist vanguard party, uniting Sinhala and Tamil militants on an anti-chauvinist program to win the masses of Tamil plantation workers, women, Sinhala workers and all the oppressed to fight for a workers and peasants government in Ceylon, part of a socialist federation of South Asia.

* * *

Workers Vanguard: The first question I'd like to ask is about the current wave of government terror against the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. How did it begin? Is it a significant escalation from before?

Amirthalingam: The police and army terror has been unleashed on them on several occasions. It actually started when, at the World Tamil Conference in 1974, the police attacked a peaceful, cultural meeting and nine Tamils died as a result. Then again in 1977 the police set in motion forces which caused widespread rioting and killing of Tamils throughout the island. In 1979, under cover of stamping out guerrillas, again violence was unleashed on the Tamil youth.

The latest outbreak was on the eve of the elections to the Development Councils. It started on the 31st of May and went on until about the 7th or 8th of June. I will say that the last one was the worst as far as the malicious destruction of cherished institutions is concerned: the destruction of the public library, the only newspaper office in Jaffna, the headquarters of the TULF, the house of the MP, the main shopping center in Jaffna city. All this shows a planned attempt on the part of the police to almost commit cultural genocide against the Tamils. Ninety-seven thousand volumes of valuable books being destroyed in the public library is an unprecedented act of vandalism for which there was no excuse. And no excuse of any type can be given in the future.

WV: When I was in Jaffna, one of the things that struck me was the presence of soldiers and police on many street corners and a real sense of occupation. How long has the army presence in the Tamil areas been like that?

Amirthalingam: The army was first brought to the Tamil areas in the '60s for the purpose of checking illicit immigration from south India. There was no doubt at that time a certain number of persons who had been sent out from Sri Lanka used to come back that way. Today there isn't even two or three percent of Tamil persons in the police and not even one percent of Tamils in the army. This has now become an army of occupation in the Tamil territories and their only function is to keep down the Tamil movements for the rights and liberation of the Tamil people.

WV: It's not just in the north, though, that the Tamils are being attacked. For instance in the education system they've stopped giving courses in Tamil at the other universities outside Jaffna.

Amirthalingam: Yes, certain Tamil streams have been closed down. The excuse they give us is that there are not enough Tamil students. Even in the Colombo University. As you know, with the Tamils and the Muslims taken together, Colombo city is more than 50 percent Tamil-speaking. In spite of it, even in the Colombo University gradually the Tamil streams are being dried up.

But the worst discrimination has been in the numbers of Tamil students admitted to the universities. The Tamil students admitted to the various faculties got reduced even below their population ratio. Their ratio was much higher in the past when merit was the basis. Now only 30 percent [of students] are admitted on merit. The rest are admitted on a district basis with the result that the proportion

of Tamil students admitted has been reduced very much.

WV: I don't know whether you were aware of struggles against this at Colombo University. Some of our comrades played a leading role and there was, in fact, coordination between the Jaffna University Students Union and these students.

Amirthalingam: Yes, I am aware of that. In fact in matters like this we have taken up the cause of the Sinhalese students.

Even when the recent strike of the workers took place, our union, the Tamil-language unions, also joined in their strike and we tried our level best to get the government to reinstate the workers whom they dismissed. So that we also have taken up the cause of the Sinhalese students and the Sinhalese workers when they were penalized by the Jayewardene government.

WV: I wanted to get to a bit about the left movement in Sri Lanka, which has had a strong association with people claiming to be Trotskyist. It seems to us that the record of the left has been very bad on the Tamil question. For instance I believe that the [ex-Trotskyist] LSSP, when it was a much healthier organization, at the time of independence, accepted a flag with the lion on it, which has a lot of Sinhala symbolism.

Amirthalingam: I was, as a student in the university, a very ardent sympathizer of the LSSP, and I studied Marxism in Dr N M Perera's house, and I even attended Marxist classes in Mr Philip Gunawardena's house. But when, at the beginning of independence, Mr Philip Gunawardena, of all people, supported the adoption of the lion flag as the national flag of Ceylon, I felt that they were just politicians and not Marxist revolutionaries in that sense. But I even then continued to have some faith in Dr N M Perera.

In '56 when the Sinhala Only Act was introduced, the LSSP headed by Dr N M Perera and the CP, that is the Moscow wing of the Communist Party (of course, at that time they had not split into Moscow and Peking), stood for parity of status and they supported us in our struggle. But within four years, in 1960, after Bandaranaike died, they made an all-out bid to capture power through the polls. When that failed, the Communist Party was the first to capitulate. They accepted Sinhala only, subject to certain rights. And then the LSSP also capitulated.

The surrender to Sinhala chauvinism was complete in 1964 when Dr N M Perera and the LSSP joined Mrs Bandaranaike's government. At that stage, it was only Mr Edmund Samarakkody and Meryl Fernando who broke with them. I was also in Parliament at that time and we all voted together with Edmund Samarakkody and Meryl Fernando, and by one vote we were able to defeat Mrs Bandaranaike's government. From that time onwards the LSSP and the Communist Party started completely aligning themselves with the chauvinist SLFP.

In 1970 when they came to power, they themselves drafted a constitution. Colvin R de Silva, one of the theorists of the Trotskyist movement, was the Minister for Constitutional Affairs. We met him and talked to him to include at least certain rights for the Tamil language in the constitution. He was worse than Mrs Bandaranaike in these matters. He was so intransigent. They wanted to convince the Sinhala people that they were more Sinhala than even Mrs Bandaranaike.

WV: I've seen reports that in an independent Eelam, Trincomalee might become the capital. It's one of the best naval harbors in the world, an historically very important strategic center, and there are a lot of reports about the Americans being very interested in having it as a base. I wonder what your attitude to that is and in particular what you think the attitude of the Indians might be to this, especially since India is in a military alliance with the Soviet Union.

Amirthalingam: I think that is one of the most important points of potential conflict in the South Asian region. I have openly said in Parliament and outside that any move by this government to give any facilities to America in Trincomalee would be opposed by us, and I made that an issue because the Prime Minister issued a press statement on the 25th of May, when he returned from the Philippines wherein he said that the Defense Agreement with Britain of 1947 is still in force as far as the UNP government is concerned.

I know that India is very much concerned with that and very much alarmed and this will bring Ceylon, Trincomalee and the Indian Ocean into the vortex of big power struggle.

WV: Our new group Spartacist League/Lanka has put a lot of emphasis on the effort to seek a joint class struggle between the Tamil and Sinhala working classes. We would like to see, rather than a partition, a bi-national workers state.

Amirthalingam: The unfortunate situation is that left movements inside Ceylon, including that new left, the JVP, they are all essentially Sinhala-oriented. The JVP, in their lectures delivered to their recruits in 1970, before their insurgency, one was on Indian expansionism. It was not Indian expansionism, it was essentially directed against the plantation Tamil labor and they believed in destroying the plantation industry and the plantation laborers. Even the Communist Party has at least said that the right to self determination should be recognized. Of course they say that the right to secede is not there.

I have openly said that if any revolutionary left movement grows in the south which is prepared to recognize our right of self-determination, we are prepared to throw in our lot with them in a common struggle. But unfortunately I don't see the prospects of a force like that emerging in the south. And in the meantime, before that happens, we run the risk of being crushed altogether. So we have to struggle by ourselves.

If there is a movement of sufficient strength among the Sinhalese which recognizes our right of self-determination — including secession, the Bolshevik Party in Russia under Lenin put forward before the revolution — we are prepared to join hands with them in a common struggle. Maybe at the end of it we may agree to work out some way of living together.

WV: We would certainly say that the right of the Tamils to self-determination must be recognized and that the Tamil question is an acid test for revolutionists.

Amirthalingam: I have seen the document signed by your group. I appreciate very much the stand that has been taken there. But it will take a long time for your group to gather sufficient momentum to be a force with which we can align there. Certainly, on any common issues, we are prepared to join hands with them in struggle. ■

Spartacist no 31-32 (Summer 1981)

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Down with Anti-Tamil Terror in Sri Lanka!

MELBOURNE — A small but spirited demonstration took place here on 1 September outside the Ceylon Tea Centre to protest the continuing murderous terror against the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka (Ceylon). Threatened by Tamil agitation for a separate state in the northern and eastern provinces, the dominant Sinhala-chauvinist United National Party (UNP) government of J R Jayewardene has launched a series of communalist pogroms against the Tamils over past months. In June the attacks were centred in the north in and around Jaffna (see interview below) but in early August the communal attacks spread to the rubber and tea estates in the Ratnapura district south-east of the capital Colombo where the India-derived Tamils (imported for labour last century) are disenfranchised, virtual slave labour. In both June and August, Jayewardene declared a state of emergency as a pretext for roundups and repression of Tamils, and massive deportation of these Tamil plantation workers back to India has already begun.

The demonstration was called by the Spartacist League to spotlight the repression and, here in racist "White Australia", pledge our internationalist solidarity with Sri Lanka's oppressed Tamils. Similar protests have been held in New York, London and West Germany. On 24 July, hundreds of Tamils joined a demonstration in West Berlin, initiated by our comrades of the Trotskistische Liga Deutschlands against attempts to deport Tamil refugees seeking political asylum in the Western "democracies". In all these demonstrations the sections of the international Spartacist tendency have been virtually the only left group participating, along with Tamil refugees and the bourgeois-nationalist Tamil United Liberation Front.

The demonstration demanded "Down with anti-Tamil terror and discrimination in Sri Lanka!", "Cops and army out of the Tamil areas — smash the state of emergency!", "Free all victims of anti-Tamil terror!" and "For the Tamil right

of self determination!". Other slogans carried by Spartacist supporters included "Not Sinhala against Tamil but class against class", "Tamil workers — key to Sri Lankan revolution", "Down with the UNP government — no new popular fronts", "No imperialist bases in Trincomalee", "Defence of Vietnam, USSR begins in Pine Gap, Diego Garcia and Trincomalee" and "Build the Trotskyist party in Sri Lanka" referring to the tasks of our comrades of the newly-formed Spartacist League/Lanka. It was around the questions of a fighting orientation toward the most oppressed layers (Tamils, women), an intransigent stand against popular frontist coalitionism on the island and the Russian question that the SL/Lanka was formed (see *Spartacist* no 31-32, advertised in this issue, for details of the fusion).

The rest of the left, contacted about the demonstration, boycotted it, save a couple of half-hearted SWP salesmen. This is more than just petty sectarianism. It is a capitulation to insular Australian nationalism. As a Spartacist spokesman noted in his speech at the demonstration, "one of the weaknesses of the left and labour movement is a commitment to the reform of Australian capitalism and historically a policy of White Australia". Australia's position as a white outpost in the Asian region makes solidarity action in defence of the Asian workers and oppressed a concrete test of any pretensions to revolutionary internationalism. As the Spartacist speaker concluded,

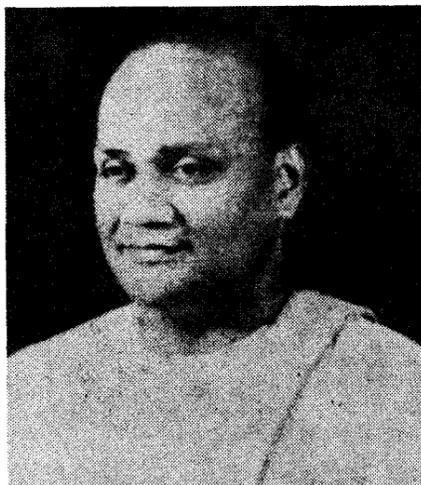
"We of the SL as Trotskyists have an international perspective, a commitment to the building of socialism and the overthrow of capitalism in this region... There is no way that the anti-Tamil terror, the discrimination in all respects of social life and in the workforce against women on the island of Sri Lanka will be resolved in the interests of the working-class movement, in the interests of the Tamil minority, in the interests of the women of Sri Lanka, short of proletarian revolution." ■

ASp photo



Melbourne: SL demonstrates against anti-Tamil terror (top). Body of TULF supporter murdered by the army (bottom).

Interview with Tamil Leader



A Amirthalingam.

We print below excerpts from an interview with Mr A Amirthalingam, leader of Sri Lanka's Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), currently the main parliamentary opposition to the government of President J R Jayewardene's United National Party (UNP). It is abridged from the fuller version published in *Workers Vanguard*, no 285, 17 July 1981.

In June, in the predominantly Tamil Jaffna peninsula, cops and troops went on a murderous rampage and a state of emergency was declared throughout the island. A recent 8 million rupee bank robbery (\$400,000), allegedly by the underground Young Tigers Liberation Movement, and an incident of cop killing provided the pretext for J R's wave of

terror (see *Spartacist Britain* no 33, June 1981).

Since this interview, a fresh wave of communal terror broke out in early August, directed against the Indian Tamil plantation workers of the Ratnapura area. At least 10 were murdered, dozens of Tamil-owned shops were looted and burned and thousands of refugees fled the rampaging Sinhalese-chauvinist mobs, many to India. Jayewardene declared another state of emergency on 17 August (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 September).

The TULF has countered Jayewardene's onslaughts in the streets with parries in Parliament and pro-Tamil proclamations to the United Nations. But, akin to Sun Yat-sen's pre-1923 Kuomin-

tang, the Parliament-oriented TULF has been pushed by bloody repression to the limits of its bourgeois-nationalist politics. In the context of the 1977 pogroms, they adopted a plank for "scientific socialism".

Yet the TULF is now seeking an alliance with the bourgeois, Sinhala-chauvinist Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) of Mrs Bandaranaike and other out-of-power parliamentary parties (LSSP, CCP, MEP). This bloc, which first appeared on May Day 1981, aims at the same kind of coalitionism which in the past has had such tragic consequences for the Ceylonese masses, such as the crushing of the 1971 JVP uprising.

Continued on page seven