

CP Demands Witchhunt of Far Left

Anti-Terrorist Hysteria in Italy

50,000 Troops Search Rome

APRIL 4—The March 16 kidnapping of former Italian premier Aldo Moro on the streets of Rome amidst a hail of machine-gun bullets was not just another terrorist action in a country where assassinations and abductions have become commonplace. The most dramatic act of individual terrorism in post-war Europe, this elaborate operation carried out by the anarcho-Maoist "Red Brigades" (BR) with military-like efficiency was widely contrasted to the notorious incompetence of the Italian state machinery. But although it further discredited the regime, in its wake the BR attack has evoked an unaccustomed delirium of "national unity" against terrorism which is being translated into decrees granting police the most sweeping powers of repression since the fall of Mussolini.

Rome was put under virtual military occupation as over 50,000 police and troops blocked all roads and conducted a house-to-house dragnet looking for Moro. Yet the search for Italy's leading bourgeois politician continues to no avail. Taunting the government, Moro's abductors subsequently dropped off two of the getaway cars near the scene of the kidnapping. Ruling Christian Democrats have been thrown into a panic at the prospect that the five-time premier may be "induced to speak in a manner that could be disagreeable and dangerous in certain circumstances" (letter from Moro, quoted in *New York Times*, 30 March) and air the past 30 years of governmental dirty laundry.

In another slap in the face against the Italian state, Moro's letter suggested an intervention by the Vatican. A spokesman for the pope responded that this was possible. Meanwhile the Roman underworld has joined the manhunt in order to hurry up a return to normality; the uproar and police mobilization in the wake of the Moro kidnapping was "bad for business." And when the "anti-terrorist" laws were stiffened, this too was done *all'italiana*: a distinction will henceforth be made between common kidnappings for purposes of extortion and the more threatening political kidnappings. (Last year there were 78



Rastelli/Epoca

Rome cops mob scene of Moro kidnapping March 16.

kidnappings in Italy, mostly for ransom.)

Yet the most outspoken voice clamoring for "law and order" is none other than the Communist Party (PCI), which for the first time in 30 years has now formally joined the government majority in parliament. Offering themselves up as the most fervent protector of the bourgeois order, the PCI has demanded expansion of the state secret police and more vigorous suppression of "political criminality." The pro-Socialist news magazine *L'Espresso* (2 April) entitled its lead editorial, "From now on the duel is between the BR and the PCI. And the PCI cannot afford to lose."

Immediately following news of Moro's abduction, the unitary labor federation (CGIL-CISL-UIL) issued a call for a general strike against terrorism. (This was ironic since the unions

had been threatening for months to call a general strike against the government's austerity policies, but always kept postponing it.) Hundreds of thousands throughout Italy attended mass demonstrations as the red banners of the PCI intermingled with the white flags of the Christian Democracy (DC) for the first time in decades. Even northern factories which had been considered strongholds of "far left" syndicalists joined in the general strike.

Prostrate before this massive outcry for capitalist law and order, most of the Italian far left has either retreated into timid neutrality or echoed the PCI's charges that the BR action was a rightist provocation (or the work of unnamed foreign intelligence agencies). When bourgeois hysteria wins popular support these inveterate tailists, who cheer on urban guerrilla warfare (so long as it

occurs elsewhere), abandon the duty of revolutionists to defend those who attack the symbols or representatives of the capitalist class.

But the BR's kidnapping of Moro was indeed extraordinarily stupid. Rather than accomplish its stated intention to "mobilize the most vast and unified armed initiative for the further growth of class war for communism" (BR communiqué, quoted in *Corriere della Sera*, 19 March), their action succeeded only in mobilizing the most vast and unified outpouring of support for the bourgeois state and its repressive apparatus. The leading contender for Italian presidency next December, Moro is not a widely hated figure. Unlike many of his Christian Democratic cohorts, he was not a former fascist. He is best known as the architect of the

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Shah's Troops Gun Down Hundreds

Anti-Shah Protests Erupt in Iran

The largest political protests seen in Iran in 15 years continue to shake the barbaric dictatorship of Reza Shah Pahlavi, that self-appointed and CIA-invested "King of Kings." Late in February, thousands took to the streets of the country's second largest city, Tabriz, in the northern province of Azerbaijan, to express their hatred of the bloody regime. Now, following the traditional Muslim 40-day mourning period for the victims of the Shah's repression at Tabriz, strikes and demonstrations have erupted in at least a dozen cities.

Banks and offices of the government's Restakhiz Party were singled out for attacks in several towns and the northeastern city of Isfahan. By March 31 five banks in Teheran had been firebombed, and the police had been heavily reinforced in an attempt to crush the rebellion. Although dozens of anti-Shah leafleters have been gunned down or arrested, as of April 2 the demonstrations were continuing.

Meanwhile at Qasr, Iran's largest prison, political prisoners staged a hunger strike in mid-March demanding retrial before civilian courts rather than military tribunals, an end to overcrowding and poor food, and permission for family visits. Riot police have repeatedly clashed outside Qasr with relatives of prisoners demanding such visitation rights.

On February 19 the Tabriz market was shut down as a gesture of solidarity with student protests which had been called at the end of a 40-day period of mourning for the hundreds of demonstrators who had been massacred by the Iranian military in the city of Qom on January 9. Tabriz exploded when the Shah's bloodthirsty storm-troopers attacked unarmed protesters who had peacefully gathered at a mosque.

Chanting throngs surged through the streets of the Azerbaijani capital, hurling rocks and even Molotov cocktails at government buildings, banks, hotels and movie houses. Before the end of the day riotous crowds reportedly had taken control of the streets between the university and the airport, a distance of seven miles.

Continuing the following day, the Tabriz protests targeted symbols of the despised Pahlavi autocracy. Angry mobs stormed and torched the local headquarters of the so-called "National Resurgence" (Restakhiz) Party established by the Shah in 1974 to be Iran's only legal political party. Also destroyed were official emblems, which had been erected all over Iran by the Shah in 1971 commemorating the supposed 2,500th anniversary of the Persian empire. At that time 10,000 suspected opponents of the regime were rounded up to ensure that no "disturbances" mar the festivities. But among the masses burning memories still linger of how the Shah regaled presidents, princes and sheiks with caviar-stuffed quail eggs in the ruins of ancient Persepolis while famine raged in several provinces, forcing the peasants to eat straw and in some instances even to sell their children for a pittance to buy some scraps of food.

During the second day of the protests the Shah mobilized armored cars and units of machine gun wielding soldiers to brutally restore "law and order." While official sources claim "only" nine killed, other reports of how over a hundred were gunned down and many



"Islamic Marxist" anti-Shah protesters in Washington, November 15.

more wounded by the vicious Iranian military are undoubtedly far closer to the real truth. Similarly, the number arrested in Tabriz is certainly much greater than the 700 announced by Teheran. Official claims that only one or two thousand "terrorists" languish in the Shah's dungeons have been thoroughly exposed even by bourgeois civil-libertarian organizations such as Amnesty International, which puts the number of victims of the Shah's white terror as high as 100,000.

"Crush the Foreign Worshippers!"

In the past the Shah has quite brazenly justified his reign of terror as simply necessary security measures aimed only at isolated "Communist terrorists." On numerous occasions the Shah has countered charges of massive "human rights violations" with the claim that his regime has never been more stable and rests on a wide base of popular support. To dramatize his false claim the Shah even made the pretense last summer of beginning to relax the repression in Iran, notably by permitting political prisoners held in SAVAK torture chambers to be tried before civilian courts rather than before star-chamber military tribunals as in the past.

But over the last several months the Shah has had to contend with broader political protests and growing civil

disorder that even "His Majesty" dare not simply dismiss as isolated terrorist actions by clandestine urban guerrilla groups in their death throes. Last November student demonstrations erupted in the heart of the capital city of Teheran. To suppress these protests the Shah felt compelled to send against the unarmed students not only his sadistic cops but also plainclothes SAVAK thugs—who could be portrayed as "outraged bystanders" rushing into the fray to give their beloved Shah a helping hand in restoring order on the campus.

Despite massive repression and the formidable mobilization of the armed forces in Teheran, several weeks later demonstrations in the capital greeted U.S. President Carter when he arrived for his New Year's palaver with the Shah. In response, the Shah opened the third congress of his puppet Restakhiz Party with the shrill call for "complete awareness and alertness against anti-national plots" (quoted in *Guardian* [London], 5 January 1978). The frenzied delegates responded with the cry, "Crush the foreign worshippers!"

What worries the Shah is that his active political opposition has been spreading beyond the bounds of the campuses in Iran. At Tabriz, as was also the case at Qom in early January, student radicals were joined by opponents of the Shah from among the reactionary *ulema*—the scholars, teachers and jurists who compose the Islamic religious hierarchy. It was accusations

against the exiled religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini made by the semi-official Teheran paper *Ettela'at* that touched off the Qom demonstrations; among the more prominent victims of the ensuing repression were five anti-Shah religious leaders who were exiled to remote cities in particularly arid wastelands of the country.

The *ulema* has been left as the sole focus for anti-Shah and anti-American sentiment among the Iranian masses by the decimation of the pro-Moscow Tudeh party after 1953, and the repression of the bourgeois nationalists of Mossadegh's National Front. While the remnants of the National Front are barely tolerated as the "Union of National Front Forces," the Tudeh party has been reduced to a clandestine or exile existence.

The Spectre of '63

While the Shah was able to suppress the Qom protests through brute military force, the Tabriz "riots" represented a far more serious threat to the Peacock Throne. A very similar uprising in 1963 brought the Pahlavi monarchy to the brink of disaster.

As seems to have been the case in Tabriz, at that time as well the *ulema* played a prominent role in leading mass opposition to the Shah. Nor does the parallel end there. As at Qom in early January, so in 1963 the protests were sparked when the government accused the religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini of opposing land reforms dictated by the Shah's "White Revolution." When Khomeini was arrested on charges of having distributed leaflets opposing land reform, mass protests erupted in Teheran and fighting broke out after soldiers were sent against huge crowds who were chanting, "Down with the Shah!" Several attempts were made to seize the Teheran radio station, while clashes also occurred in the cities of Shiraz, Isfahan and Qom, and several nomadic tribes rose in revolt.

So critical was the situation that the Shah's military advisers thought that the troops in Teheran would probably mutiny if ordered to fire on the crowds in the streets for a second day. Fresh military units had to be mobilized in order to drown the rebellion in blood. As many as 15,000 people were reportedly killed in the 1963 uprising.

Coming in the wake of the Qom protests, the recent "riot" in Tabriz, a key city containing a significant concentration of the small but combative Iranian proletariat, graphically demonstrated the fragility of the Iranian autocratic regime. It was quite significant that according to BBC radio reports U.S. naval units in the Indian Ocean were put on alert for several days after the outbreak in Tabriz. U.S. imperialism wanted to be prepared for a possible intervention in the event that Iranian troops might prove unreliable in suppressing the Tabriz revolt before the unrest spread to Teheran. Even though the Iranian military machine has already become enormous (over the last five years alone the Shah has purchased from the U.S. some \$18 billion in weapons and plans to buy another ten Boeing radar aircraft, 140 F-16 fighters and 250 F-18's), the U.S. still maintains at least 35,000 U.S. military personnel in Iran (projected to rise to 60,000 by 1980). Not long ago Carter issued a directive to expand "U.S. strategic priorities to include defending the

Persian Gulf" with "the use of possible ground forces, supported by air and naval units in the Persian Gulf or the Middle East" (*Chicago Sun Times*, 11 September 1977).

What "White Revolution"?

Unable to persist in the claim that the Qom and Tabriz protests were simply the work of "terrorists," the Shah has taken to pointing his bejeweled accusing finger at an allegedly unholy alliance of ultra-traditionalist Muslim fanatics and leftists. According to Teheran, the Tabriz "riots" were instigated by "Islamic Marxists" and feudalist *ulemas*, who for religious reasons were opposed to the so-called "reforms" which the Shah has introduced to improve the status of women and the position of the mass of impoverished peasantry.

This is a charge which has been used for some time by the Shah. Ever since the CIA-inspired coup which installed him on the throne in 1953, the Shah has made demagogic use of opposition to his "White Revolution" from within the reactionary *ulema*. But, insofar as the so-called "White Revolution" was more than purely cosmetic, it was designed to stave off a convulsive peasant rebellion by creating a small stratum of prosperous small landowners to act as a buffer. As such, the Shah's agrarian reform closely resembled the Stolypin reforms imposed in tsarist Russia after the 1905 Revolution.

For the mass of rural toilers the "White Revolution" has brought absolutely nothing. Under the traditional Iranian landholding system the peasantry was divided into the *khushnishins* (landless) and the *nasaqdars*, who had the right to work a plot of land in exchange for yielding to the landlord a



Carter's "Human Rights" means Butcher Shah.

share of the crop. Under the Shah's land "reform" only the *nasaqdars* were eligible to purchase land. Thus by 1967, after five years of the "White Revolution," only 4 percent of the peasantry—mainly usurers and kulaks—had actually received ownership of any land, while the vast majority of the Iranian peasantry have become either rent-paying tenants (as opposed to sharecroppers) or else pauperized agricultural laborers forced by famines and destitution to trek into the squalid urban shantytowns in search of some subsistence livelihood.

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Meanwhile, the rural bourgeoisie has been economically strengthened by the land "reform" scheme. Compensation for lands sold under the "reform" is given in the form of shares in state-owned enterprises rather than monetary payments, thereby serving to fuse the traditional landowning class with industrial capital under state sponsorship.

Even more spurious are the claims of the regime to have improved the status of women in Islamic Iran. Much ado has been made about how the hideously oppressive Muslim family laws have been reformed and how women have been given the franchise.

In reality, however, the bulk of the family laws has been left intact under the "White Revolution." As before, Muslim women are still forbidden to marry non-Muslim men. Regardless of her age, no woman may marry without the consent of her parents; no woman may leave the country without the consent of her father or husband; no woman may appear as a witness in a divorce case; and no woman may take a job which her husband considers to be "injurious" to the "dignity" of the family. And, according to the infamous code 179, if a man finds his wife in bed with another man and murders one or both of them, he is acquitted ([*ISA Resistance*, June 1973]).

While women have been given the right to vote, in practice their ballots often are collected in separate boxes and then simply discarded. Moreover, if the Shah has given women the right to vote, he has also given them one—and only one—legal party to vote for!

Marx and Muhammad?

Contrary to the Shah's propaganda, the Islamic opposition to the regime is not monolithic. It encompasses everything from fanatically anti-communist *ulemas* to self-described "Islamic Marxists" who continue to support the underground guerrilla group known as the Organization of Mojahedin [Combatants] of the People of Iran (OMPI), which now claims to be "Marxist-Leninist."

However, while his claims to have promoted social equality and economic amelioration for the broad masses of Iran are phony to the core, the Shah nevertheless is not simply fabricating the charges that among the religious opposition are many who oppose reforms (regardless of whether or not the Shah has actually implemented them) which go against their traditionalist anti-Western, reactionary religious prejudices.

Aside from whether Ayatollah Khomeini opposed land reforms in 1963 or later from exile (a disputed question), at least some of the *ulema* have been known to have come out against any state confiscation of the *waqf* (religious

endowments). Moreover, even the "progressive" *ayatollahs* who declared in 1963 that they were not opposed to land reform were unanimous in denouncing the Shah for granting women the right to vote! Even today, during the Tabriz "riots" anti-Shah demonstrators reportedly assaulted women on the streets who were wearing Western-style apparel instead of the body-length, all-enveloping veil.

No wonder the Shah approaches the religious opposition with the classic carrot-and-stick approach. In the recent period the Shah has given greater freedom of expression to the *ulema* while cracking down on the ostensibly socialist left. At the same time the Shah has made numerous gestures toward the Muslim religious establishment and Islamic prejudices among the population. Newspapers have prominently featured photos of the Shah leading the Ashura morning ceremony in the main mosque in Teheran, and the regime has announced that a new Islamic university will be constructed at Mashad.

Despite their left phrasemongering, the so-called "Islamic Marxists," even those who support the "Marxist-Leninist" OMPI, capitulate to religious obscurantism and feudal-derived social codes supported by the extreme fanatics among the *ulema*. None of the "Islamic Marxists" in Iran are willing to confront the woman question head on, while most simply turn a deaf ear to the reactionary ravings of the *ayatollahs* who think that the Shah's greatest sin was giving women the vote.

For the "Islamic Marxists" (as well as the pro-Moscow Tudeh party, the Maoists and the "anti-revisionist" urban guerrillas), the reactionary Muslim opponents of the Shah are necessary allies in the struggle for a "two-stage revolution" in Iran: first a "democratic" revolution to bring to power a "progressive" nationalist and only after a period of "progressive" capitalism a subsequent socialist revolution.

But history has written in the blood of the workers and poor peasants the lesson that reliance upon the so-called national (or "anti-imperialist") bourgeoisie and subordination of the class interests of the toilers for the sake of maintaining an alliance with radical religious fanatics will only ensure that the revolution never even completes its first "stage." Kemal Atatürk was a far more "progressive" nationalist than Mossadegh or the likes of Ayatollah Khomeini; at least Atatürk waged a military struggle against the Kaliphate and British imperialism and imposed a series of real bourgeois-democratic reforms, including abolishing most of the Muslim social code holding women in bondage. But Kemal Atatürk did so not in alliance with the Turkish working class but over the corpse of the Communist Party. Such radical bourgeois

nationalists can carry out occasional very partial reforms only through establishing bonapartist regimes (usually military dictatorships) which, as the fall of Mossadegh demonstrated once again, cannot break the back of domestic reaction or sever the link of imperialist domination.

There can be no conciliation between communism and the Koran. The traditional petty bourgeoisie, the constituency of the *ulema*, is fettered by its medieval prejudices and is declining in economic importance. Like the new middle class of professionals, engineers, etc., and the peasantry—dispersed over the country, impoverished, illiterate and internally divided—the artisans and shopkeepers of the bazaar can play no independent political role. Dissolving the proletariat into the petty-bourgeois masses in the name of the "people" and a classless "democratic" revolution, would mean abandoning the leadership of both proletariat and petty bourgeoisie to the Iranian bourgeoisie. But in the imperialist epoch the democratic tasks of agrarian revolution, freeing Iran's oppressed nationalities and breaking imperialist domination, will be carried out, not with but against the Iranian bourgeoisie, through establishing a proletarian dictatorship.

Iran's 3 million-strong working class, concentrated in large masses in the factories and industrial centers, confronts the Pahlevi dictatorship in the everyday struggles for its most basic needs. A Leninist, Trotskyist party, rooted in this restive proletariat, would



Veiled woman on Teheran street.

act as the "tribune of the people," championing the needs of oppressed non-proletarian strata, but only on the basis of the independent political organization of the proletariat. Thus, revolutionary Marxists raise a program that connects urgent democratic demands with a struggle for proletarian state power:

*Down with the Shah! Smash SAVAK!
For full trade-union rights! Full legal equality for women!
For the right of self-determination for national minorities!
For a constituent assembly based on universal suffrage!
Land to the tiller!
For a workers and peasants government!*

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LONDON—When 24 supporters of the Trotskyist Faction (TF) walked out of the Workers Socialist League (WSL) at the WSL's 18-19 February second annual conference they left declaring their opposition to the central leadership's "Pabloite attachment to the Labour Party, their capitulationist attitude to nationalism, and in particular Irish nationalism, their all-pervading economism and minimalism and their parochialism" ("Statement of the Trotskyist Faction," *WV* No. 194, 24 February). Its aim, said the TF, was to struggle for a British section of a recreated Fourth International. The first step toward this goal was the rapid merger of forces with the London Spartacist Group (LSG), at a conference over the 4-5 March weekend, to form the Spartacist League/Britain (SL/B) as a sympathising organisation of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt).

This fusion is one of the largest and most important in the 15-year history of the Spartacist tendency. The new organisation already has close on 50 members and a presence both in London and the Midlands. By its comprehensive Leninist programme and clear internationalist perspectives the SL/B is exercising a strong attraction on remaining dissident elements inside the WSL. The same will soon prove true as well toward the numerous small centrist organisations, which will find in the Spartacist League a solidly programmatically based unity—in striking contrast to the short-lived, politically promiscuous unnatural couplings which pass for fusions in the highly fragmented British Trotskyoid milieu.

The factional struggle in the WSL and the fusion with the TF also vindicate in a powerful manner the iSt's policy of revolutionary regroupment. Recognising that many valuable militants are presently to be found in various pseudo-revolutionary organisations, we have fought to regroup the best of these potential cadres for the nucleus of an international vanguard party. It was essentially a process of splits and fusions, both in the U.S. and internationally, that enabled the Spartacist League/U.S. to break out of the national isolation imposed by our expulsion from Gerry Healy's 1966 International Committee (IC) conference. But for the WSL leadership around Alan Thornett any polemical combat within the left is "petty-bourgeois"; consequently the WSL has been unable to develop any coherent perspective for international work at all.

The goal of our regroupment policy has always been to decisively split the cadre of centrist organisations, in the first instance the Pabloist pretenders to Trotskyism who are the principal obstacle to reforging the Fourth International. This is exactly what has happened in the WSL. Just over four years ago *Workers Vanguard* sent a reporter to cover the British miners strike. At that time the Spartacist tendency had just made its first isolated recruits in Europe. Only at the end of 1975 were we able to establish a Spartacist group in London, and it took nearly two years of dogged propagandistic activity to achieve the breakthrough represented by the fusion with the Trotskyist Faction. But today sections of the iSt outside the U.S. make up over one-third of the total membership of the tendency internationally.

Bob Pennington, a leader of the International Marxist Group (IMG—British affiliate of the so-called United Secretariat of the Fourth International [USec]), remarked last autumn that those who proclaim themselves Trotskyists will have to choose between two "mainstreams," the USec and the iSt. By this he undoubtedly meant to suggest that the "re-united" USec would be "where the action is." But the WSL split and subsequent formation of the SL/B, establishing the iSt as a direct organisational competitor with the USec on the

One Fifth of WSL Walks Out, Fuses with iSt The Rebirth of British Trotskyism



Founding Conference of the Spartacist League/Britain.

SpB Photo

British terrain, has certainly given no comfort to Pennington et al. It indicates that there are those on the British "far left" who have had enough of chasing after whatever is popular and want to get on with the business of constructing a democratic-centralist, authentically Trotskyist International.

As for the workerist WSL, in its main reply to the TF documents the Thornett group initially referred to the oppositionists as "a small part of our movement." From the tone of their subsequent public comments it is evident that they were surprised that nearly two dozen members took the step of walking out of the Workers Socialist League. The WSL will not easily recover from the loss of two National Committee members, three members of the *Socialist Press* editorial board, three out of four members of its Irish Commission, and several regional and local organisers. With the loss of one fifth of its active membership, the WSL reverts back to its original regional limitations—the celebrated car fraction at British Leyland's Cowley plant in Oxford, the London grouping and a handful of shaky members in Yorkshire.

Moreover, Thornett's response to the challenge presented by the Trotskyist Faction was positively pathetic, both before and after the split. Perhaps sensing that he is at his weakest debating politics, Thornett simply waved his Cowley credentials as a talisman to ward off all attacks. In his hour-and-a-half opening remarks to the WSL conference he attended only briefly to the programmatic issues which were about to rip 20 percent of the participants away from him. His allegation that the TF members were only interested in "exciting politics" was hardly an indictment in view of the WSL's apolitical glorification of the "daily grind." And the failure of the majority to present any political perspective certainly contributed to the fact that a relatively large number of the TF supporters were younger rank-and-filers. Rarely has a centrist leadership presided over the coming apart of its organisation so meekly.

The WSL from Womb to...

Prior to the split of the Trotskyist Faction the WSL was already an

organisation in deep trouble, its haphazard "international work" come to naught and its domestic prospects cloudy at best. As the TF stated in its founding document:

"The WSL is in chaos. It has no clear idea of its tasks or direction.... This situation has a political origin—to put it bluntly the movement as yet lacks any programmatic basis for existence as a distinct political tendency. Every political tendency from Trotskyism to reformism is represented on the NC [National Committee] and among the membership."

—"In Defence of the Revolutionary Programme" (INDORP), [WSL] Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin No. 8, February 1978

Yet only three years ago Healy's expulsion of the Thornett grouping from his Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) made a big splash among ostensible Trotskyists throughout the world. Thornett's orthodox-sounding defence of the Transitional Programme, his well-publicised industrial militancy and opposition to Healy's sectarian practices promised to be an attractive combination. What brought about his demise?

In the mid-1960's a large part of the leadership of the shop stewards committee at the Cowley assembly plant (then Morris Motors), including Alan Thornett who had been a Communist Party trade unionist, were personally recruited by Gerry Healy to the Socialist Labour League (SLL—predecessor of the WRP). "The Cowley Fraction" was Healy's pride and joy and the major vehicle for the expression of his deformed brand of Trotskyism in the labour movement. But the first time Thornett crossed his godfather, Healy responded with vicious Mafia tactics, including physical intimidation.

The Thornett group, including the Cowley fraction was summarily expelled in December 1974 and a few months later became the core of the Workers Socialist League. The iSt assessed the split tentatively at the time:

"At present the WSL is most clearly defined negatively.... While its future programmatic course is not definitely 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," *WV* No. 69, 23 May 1975

The Trotskyist Faction, writing three years later, confirms this diagnosis: "The WSL's break from Healyite maximalism was, in the final analysis, a break towards economism and minimalism" (INDORP).

While still inside the WRP, Thornett's opposition (centred in Oxford) had linked up with another dissident clot in London at whose head stood Alan Clinton. Clinton was noteworthy for his rightist grumblings at the WRP's decision to stand candidates against Labour during the 1974 general elections, while Thornett was more interested in resurrecting the transitional demand of workers control of production. The politically heterogeneous lash-up between Clinton and Thornett was an early expression of indifference to programme which in the WSL was later to harden into purposeful confusionism.

The combination of the glamour of an influential, although localised, industrial fraction and its claim to defend orthodox Trotskyism attracted to the WSL in its early period a series of leftward moving groups. The most important source for these regroupments came from former members of Tony Cliff's International Socialists (I.S.—now Socialist Workers Party [SWP]) who were breaking from the I.S.' social-democratic workerism in the direction of Trotskyism. The majority of these elements—out of which was to crystallise the core of the later Trotskyist Faction—passed briefly through the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG).

The RCG at its formation in mid-1974 had also declaimed loudly on the importance of programme. The initial components of this group originated in the Revolutionary Opposition, expelled from the I.S. in 1973, and had seen at first hand the consequences of a mindless worship of spontaneity which produced an organisation whose net caught everything and held nothing. They were joined in the first months of 1975 by nine members of the heterogeneous Left Opposition (also formerly of the I.S.), which had split in four directions in December 1974. Iconoclastically dismissing all past struggles to construct the Fourth International, the RCG under its guru David Yaffe was principally an academic debating society organised as study groups to write a new programme.

Lacking a shared programme yet requiring a minimum of common activity, the RCG was easy prey for a trio of supporters of the American SWP who elaborated a regimen of single-issue campaigns on women, on Ireland, solidarity work with Chile and subsequently South Africa. In reaction

Alan Thornett



John Sturrock/Report

against this reformist single-issuism and attracted by Thornett's credentials as a workers leader, roughly a third of the RCG left to join the WSL in 1975.

Even Alan Thornett, whose political horizons do not generally extend far beyond the shop floor at Cowley, recognised the importance of the recruitment of this layer of cadres, which enabled the WSL to establish branches in Birmingham and Coventry in the West Midlands and in Liverpool. Speaking at a WSL Midlands Aggregate meeting in 1976 Thornett accurately termed this recruitment "the biggest gain the WSL has ever made." This would seem to fly in the face of Thornett's denigration of any orientation toward other left groups, except that the WSL leadership did almost nothing to achieve this regroupment.

...the London Spartacist Group

In late 1975 the iSt established in London a small group of experienced cadres, thus fulfilling a long-held aspiration to begin systematic work in Britain. In addition to its intrinsic strategic importance, the presence of Healy's SLL/WRP makes Britain one of the centres of ostensibly orthodox Trotskyist groupings. In the late 1950's and early 1960's the SLL's theoretical journal,

Labour Review, had begun to elaborate the struggle against Pabloist liquidationism which the American SWP had grievously neglected after the 1953 split in the Fourth International and which it was abandoning altogether by capitulating to the popularity of Castroism.

The SLL's 1960 document, "World Prospects for Socialism," moreover, was seen by the Revolutionary Tendency (RT—forerunner of the SL/U.S.) of the SWP as an articulation of its own anti-Pabloist views. The RT and later the Spartacist group sought to make common cause with Healy, but were blocked by the little despot's insistence on squelching the slightest dissent (as Thornett was to discover years later). Following our bureaucratic expulsion at the 1966 London conference of the IC, Britain remained sealed off to the Spartacist tendency for some time.

Beginning in 1975 the London Spartacist Group set out to systematically probe and polemicise with the myriad of groups and grouplets which populate the asteroid belt to the left of the centrist Pabloist IMG and the left-reformist "state capitalist" I.S./SWP. The LSG's fight for political clarity and authentic Leninism frequently upset the cosy chuminess of the British Trotskyist left. Many were shocked to hear a group which refused to succumb to the charms of the left Labourite "club," to embrace the green nationalism of the IRA or to go along with the charade of phony "mass work" which are common denominators in the intensely parochial and workerist "far left."

There were plenty of evidences of crisis in the left-of-the-Communist Party "family." The I.S. had been declining visibly from the time of the general election in February 1974 and suffered a haemorrhaging of cadre in 1975. The WRP had gone off the rails altogether, spending most of its efforts in slandering Joe Hansen (of the American SWP) and more recently in praising Libya's fanatical Muslim dictator Qaddafi. The IMG could never decide how many factions it had, oscillating up towards five, nor whether it would be super-Mandelite or a bridge to the Hansenites.

Among the smaller groups the RCG was on the road to becoming a cult, which is currently tailing after the geriatric Moscow-loyal Stalinists. Sean Matgamna's Workers Fight (ejected from the Cliffites in 1971) had just joined with the Workers Power group (a 1975 vintage I.S. expulsion) to form the International-Communist League (I-CL), while covering up differences on

the Russian question (Workers Power is state capitalist), the Labour Party and Ireland. The Workers Fight/Workers Power marriage of convenience came apart shortly before its first anniversary, having discovered unbridgeable disagreements over... Ireland and the Labour Party.

The WSL was in many respects the most serious of the split-offs from the "far-left" Big Three (SWP, IMG and WRP). The harsh contradiction between its claims to Trotskyist orthodoxy and its economist practice clearly labeled the WSL as a group heading for an explosion. And it was initially open to political discussion with other avowed anti-Pabloists. Its October 1975 document, "Fourth International—Problems and Tasks," sought to re-evaluate the history of the post-war Trotskyist movement and to serve as a basis for discussions with other tendencies, "especially those expelled from the IC" (published in the "Trotskyism Today" supplements to *Socialist Press* Nos. 21-23).

The iSt responded to this invitation with a letter (dated 17 June 1976) pointing to the WSL's softness toward social democracy and focusing on our analysis of the formation of the deformed workers states (particularly the methodologically key case of Cuba), as well as reviewing our relations with Healy's IC. The letter also attacked the workerist view that the degeneration of the IC or any tendency could simply be ascribed to its petty-bourgeois composition. Although this was the only reply to the WSL's offer of discussions, the iSt letter was not circulated even to the NC for over a year.

However, the aggressive propaganda work of the LSG made it impossible to simply seal off the WSL against Spartacism. The first fruit of these efforts was an amendment from the Liverpool branch to the international resolution at the WSL's first annual conference in December 1976. Although flawed by its attachment to WSL workerism and hence hostile to the iSt's regroupment perspective, it nonetheless demanded recognition of the principled approach to the Cuban Revolution taken by the Revolutionary Tendency in the American SWP. This was clearly counterposed to the Thornett leadership's position that there had existed only two views on Cuba: the Pabloists' enthusiasm for Castro and Healy's myopic denial that a revolution had taken place at all.

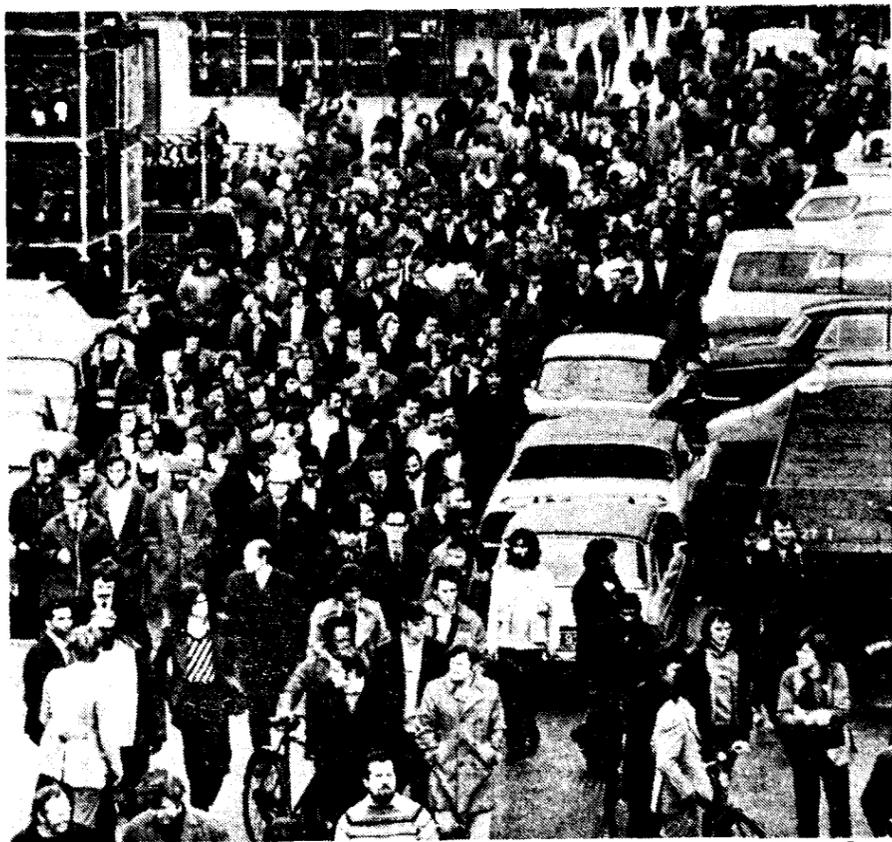
The leadership urged the conference delegates to reject the amendment, not because it was wrong (in fact they claimed to agree with it), but to prevent the resolution from turning into a book. But when the membership voted to include this amendment, the only successful motion against the platform during the proceedings, Thornett and his lieutenants simply buried it, so that the resolution as amended never saw the light of day. Although this issue had no immediate consequence, it was indicative of the WSL leaders' frenzied reaction to anything smacking of Spartacism.

The CDLM and the Lib-Lab Coalition

However, the real catalyst for the amorphous left-wing opposition which was to result in the Trotskyist Faction was the WSL's intervention in the British class struggle. A challenge to the Thornett leadership took shape around objections to the WSL-created Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement (CDLM) and to its failure to place the government question at the centre of WSL trade-union work. This failure was particularly glaring after the formation of the Labour Party's parliamentary coalition with the Liberals in March 1977.

In response to the reappearance of this British version of the popular front for the first time since World War II, the international Spartacist tendency called

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Workers leaving British Leyland's Cowley plant.

Workers Press

The Rebirth of British Trotskyism...

(continued from page 5)

for "a policy of conditional non-support to Labour in upcoming elections unless and until they repudiate coalitionism" ("Break the Liberal/Labour Coalition in Britain," *WI* No. 152, 8 April 1977). But even though Callaghan & Co. had suppressed even the organisational independence of the Labour Party by openly tying it to the bourgeois Liberals—with, moreover, the acquiescence of every single "left" MP [member of parliament] from Tony Benn and Michael Foot on down—the Workers Socialist League simply concluded that the "lefts" "should have demanded and themselves set up a new leadership based on socialist policies" (*Socialist Press*, 25 March 1977).

Within the Workers Socialist League there was dissatisfaction with the persistently apolitical character of the WSL's trade-union work. A first document, "The WSL and the Governmental Crisis" ([WSL] *Internal Bulletin* No. 19, 25 May 1977), submitted by Green, Kellett and Piersey, attempted to programmatically generalise the objections: "Although the toolroom strike objectively challenged the Social Contract and posed the removal of the anti-working class Labour Government, the consciousness of the leadership thrown up in the struggle, the subjective factor, did not correspond to those objective tasks.... Although the WSL alone recognised that the toolroom strike precipitated a major governmental crisis, Socialist Press failed to make the question of government a central programmatic issue during the strike."

At this time Green-Kellett-Piersey had not decisively broken from the WSL's accommodation to Labourism, and were searching to render the perennial Thornett slogan, "Make the Lefts Fight," revolutionary. They called on the WSL to "place demands on the lefts to support the [toolroom] strike against the Social Contract and remove the right wing [of the parliamentary Labour Party]."

The Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement, founded in 1976, was an uninspired imitation of the WRP/SLL's All Trades Union Alliance. In practice it turned out to be nothing but a forum for tedious re-counting of shop-floor struggles. As it became clear that the rank and file would not flock to the CDLM simply because it put "democracy" in its name, it soon turned into an arena for mutual accommodation between the WSL and other left groups (specifically the IMG and I-CL). Most importantly, the platform of this pan-union propaganda bloc—like Alan Thornett's campaign for president of the Transport and General Workers Union—did not seek to break the mass of British workers from their Labourite traditions and consciousness.

The CDLM program comes down to opposition to wage controls and spending cuts and calls for more democracy in the unions. It even limits the call for nationalisation to those firms threatened with bankruptcy or large-scale redundancies. It does not contain any demand for the expropriation of all capitalist industry, thus placing the CDLM to the right of the maximum programme of the Labour Party on this question. There is no mention of opposition to the presence of the British imperialist army in Northern Ireland or to the Labour "lefts" chauvinist call for import controls, much less of the need for a revolutionary workers government.

Describing the reformist CDLM, an LSG leaflet noted that it embodied the central weakness of the British left: "...glorification of spontaneous 'rank and file' trade union militancy and...political capitulation to British



Socialist Press

Founding conference of the WSL-led Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement.

social democracy" ("CDLM: WSL's 'Short Cut' to Nowhere," 27 March 1977). A parallel criticism was raised in the Green-Kellett-Piersey document:

"Our failure to make the question of programme and government central was not confined to the pages of Socialist Press. It was evident at the CDLM recall conference....

"Although a special resolution was passed by the conference on the Lib-Lab coalition, the vital political question facing the conference on government was relegated almost to a side issue, discussed separately from the wages struggle and the fight for leadership in the trade unions...."

The LSG leaflet also attacked the WSL's justification for its adaptation to shop-floor militancy: "For a small grouping, like the WSL, to decide to 'shake off propagandism' in order to proceed directly to 'conquering the masses' is profoundly anti-Leninist. A revolutionary organisation only acquires the ability to lead whole sections of the proletariat as it assembles a cadre trained through hard principled struggle for communist politics" ("CDLM: WSL's 'Short Cut' to Nowhere").

The Green-Kellett-Piersey document touched on the WSL's policy of shunning polemical combat with centrist groups, although the criticism was largely empirical and put in the mildest terms: "We also showed political weakness in not taking up the IMG adequately at the conference.... their argument that the CDLM shouldn't (politically) counterpose itself to the Stalinists' 'diversionary' initiatives was part of their left cover for Stalinism. The difference between us and the Pabloites was not that they had differences of where and how to fight for programme.... but they are not prepared to fight at all for programme." Neither, it turned out, was the Thornett leadership, which responded:

"We are told by the comrades that we did not take up the IMG adequately at the conference. That we should have made a clear statement on their role as a left cover for the Stalinists. Such a course of action would have been a disaster. It would have been certain to drive the IMG out of the CDLM."

"Reply to 'The WSL and the Governmental Crisis'," by Alan Thornett, [WSL] *Internal Bulletin* No. 21

Workers Government and "Make the Lefts Fight"

The French municipal elections and Irish general elections, which both took place in the spring of 1977, renewed the debate inside the WSL on the question of popular frontism, in particular on the question of votes to the workers parties of a popular front. At the WSL's summer school in July this issue was debated both at the session on Ireland and at the National Committee meeting. It was indicative of the scant importance given to such "abstract" subjects prior to this time that even *Socialist Press* editor John Lister, backed by Alan Thornett, could consider it a rightist notion that any self-proclaimed revolutionary

would even consider voting for the workers parties of a popular front.

At the NC meeting spokesmen for the opposing positions—Steve Murray *for* voting for workers parties in a popular front and Mark Hyde and Jim Short *against*—were directed to submit documents defending their respective positions. Without waiting for the resolution of the debate, however, *Socialist Press* went into print on 17 August declaring that it would continue to call for votes to Labour until such time as there were actually joint Lib-Lab slates. And as the faction fight developed, for the first time drawing hard lines on programmatic questions in the WSL, Thornett, Lister & Co. became far more cautious in toying around with positions which had been branded "Spartacist."

In the course of the discussions over the question of voting for candidates of a popular front, some individuals switched positions and the battle lines began to be drawn. A document, "The Coalition, 'Make the Lefts Fight' and the Workers' Government Slogan" ([WSL] *Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 2, January 1978), was written during late autumn by Green, Holford, Kellett, Murray, Quigley and Short which called for a position of "no vote for the candidates of workers' parties (like the Labour Party) which are in a Popular Front combination" (Thesis 2 of the conclusion). On the question of the slogan of a workers government the document took the position of Trotsky, who spelt this out in discussions with leaders of the then-revolutionary American SWP: "...the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is the only possible form of a workers' and farmers' government." Thus point 7 of the conclusion states:

"The WSL advances the slogan of 'a workers' government' as a pseudonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Its essential content—a government that rules in the interests of the working class and bases itself, not on the bourgeois state, but on the independent organisations of the working class—remains, whether or not it is advocated as a propaganda or an agitational slogan."



UPI
Labour prime minister Callaghan (left) and Liberal Party leader Steel. No votes for candidates of the Lib-Lab coalition!

Concerning the question of voting for popular front candidates the document states forcefully that this is no tactical or technical matter. This question is today the dividing line between those who give "critical" support to the popular front, seeking to place it in power, and the Bolshevik policy of proletarian opposition to coalitionism. But this is far from a passive or abstentionist position. The authors of the document wrote:

"... We call for the unions nationally to withdraw union sponsorship from all MPs who support the coalition....

"We must develop a fight in local Labour Party constituencies for the removal of sitting MPs and the selection of candidates who stand on a revolutionary programme opposed to the coalition.... In bye-elections at present we can give no support to L.P. candidates who defend the coalition and will have to consider critically supporting in some cases centrist or revisionist candidates if they make opposition to the coalition and wage control central to their platform."

—"The Coalition, 'Make the Lefts Fight' and the Workers Government Slogan"

Whereas in the past the WSL had not taken a clear position on the question of voting for popular front candidates, its capitulation to social democracy was clearly expressed in the standing demand to "make the lefts fight," the alpha and omega of Thornett's policy toward the Labour Party. This policy came under sharp attack in the oppositionists' document:

"The present unity of Heffer, Benn, Foot, Healey, and Callaghan in jointly defending the coalition reveals the essential programmatic agreement between the 'left' and right....

"...we should in no way create a false distinction between them and their right-wing bed fellows when the 'lefts' are in no way distinguishing themselves from the right wing by their actions....

To place demands exclusively on the 'lefts' when they are unified with the right wing in opposing the struggles in the working class developing on the two decisive issues of wage control and the coalition, means that the WSL argues that the 'lefts' do fundamentally differ from the right-wing. When the 'lefts' have made no break from the right, not even verbally allied themselves with the wages struggles, the demand that they 'kick out' Healey, Callaghan et al acts in practice to strengthen illusions both in the 'lefts' as an alternative leadership and in reformism.

"This present orientation of the movement, summed up in the slogan 'Make the Lefts Fight', elevates the tactic of the united front and critical support into a strategic orientation.

"The League places these demands on the lefts because it makes its starting point a preconceived desire to secure unity with the left against the right, and from an ahistorical perspective that the task is to take the working class through a fresh stage of reformist betrayal." [emphasis in original]

—*Ibid.*

The Formation of the Trotskyist Faction

Around the time of the WSL 1977 summer school, some of the emerging oppositionists began to realise that fidelity to Trotskyism required a full-scale programmatic combat against Thornett's workerism. In a letter dated



"I have been re-reading some of the Spartacist's material over the last couple of days, including some of their basic documents (declaration of principles, intervention at the 66 IC conference), their letter to the OCI and their letter to the [Spanish] LCE, and the founding document of their French section, the Ligue Trotskyiste de France. What has struck me is the absolute consistency with which they have fought for their positions since the early 1960's, and through the period subsequent to their foundation they have been able to build in a real way both in American and internationally on the basis of democratic centralism.

"Politically they seem to me to represent the only revolutionary current in existence. They have understood the revisions of Pabloism and the complementary errors of the IC in a very complete way, have analysed and fought all the petty bourgeois radicalism that has been prevalent since the late 60's (feminism, New Leftism, guerillaism) and in a complementary fashion have stood out against the capitulation of the so-called Trotskyists of the USFI (both wings) to Popular Frontism and to the widespread economism that has afflicted the left since the working class began to break out into struggle in a big way over the last decade. This political independence and consistency has been reflected in a very precise and conscious understanding of the tasks that face small groups of revolutionaries in the present conditions, summed up in their formulation of the fighting propaganda group. The value of their positions has been apparent again and again in facing the problems that actually confront the WSL (syndicalist approach, obscuring of the need for a new revolutionary party opposed to the Labour Party, misuse of resources, neglect of the left groups and the lack of a consistent political line which is clearly before the membership as it carries out its work, question of inner party democracy and leadership). I have come to the conclusion that their approach to the Labour Party has the virtue of at least according with the real situation in the working class, and the fact that the Labour Party is losing support very rapidly—they see work directed at the LP as having the purpose of splitting and winning advanced workers through grappling with the turns in the objective situation and the manoeuvres of the reformists, while maintaining clearly the necessity for a Trotskyist party in front of the working class. On the trade unions their idea of the trade union caucus seems to provide the possibility of a genuine growth and the serious training of a new leadership without liquidation or opportunism, which the CDLM to me represents. Again on Ireland they have seriously confronted the problems presented by the particular form which the national question takes (not a new position incidentally, and indicative of their ability to confront major theoretical questions concretely and in relation to the world political situation).

"I saw... at Grunwicks on Monday. They asked me if I had any questions on their politics or things I couldn't understand. I was in the uncomfortable position of having to say that I could quite see the logic of their positions.... This was the only formulation that I could come up with to actually forestall a discussion over points which I agreed with any way. That made me realise that I have a responsibility to face up to their existence and my essential agreement with them. From now on I intend to fight for their politics inside the WSL."

As the document on "The Coalition, 'Make the Lefts Fight' and the Workers Government Slogan" went through successive drafts over two months, the discussions within what had been an amorphous left wing of the WSL showed a growing political differentiation. By the time the jointly written document was submitted it was apparent that the signatories were on the verge of a parting of political paths. The majority (represented by Green, Holford, Quigley and Short) were coming to the conception that, while it was conceivable that much of the WSL membership and even a section of the leadership could possibly be won to the revolutionary programme, this could only be done through the process of insurrecting against the WSL's Healyite-derived practice and tradition, which had to be destroyed.

Murray and Kellett, however, pulled back sharply and went on to play a dishonourable role as a left cover for the WSL leadership, sharing many of the programmatic positions of the Trotskyist Faction but subordinating these to their desire not to break with Thornett. This political differentiation was extremely important because it ruptured the personal ties between the ex-I.S./RCgers, establishing unambiguously that programme comes first. Within a short period after this break with the Murray clot the TF had produced its comprehensive political statement, "In Defense of the Revolutionary Programme."

INDORP provided for the first time what the WSL had lacked from the beginning, a coherent Trotskyist programme and perspective. It took up many of the questions raised by the iSt letter of June 1976 (Cuba, history of the IC, trade-union policy, "make the lefts fight") and other key issues facing a revolutionary vanguard in Britain, notably the Irish question (see more below). It also drew a sharply critical balance sheet of the WSL's incompetent and opportunist international work:

"Unable to build an anti-revisionist, democratic centralist international tendency on the basis of a clear programmatic attitude to the basic tasks of revolutionaries in this epoch and the decisive issues of the class struggle internationally (opposition to popular frontism, defence of the deformed workers' states, political struggle against nationalism and the necessity to re-create the Fourth International), the central leadership has led the WSL into a world of rotten blocs, cover-ups, diplomacy and intrigue—masquerading as the fight to 'reconstruct' the Fourth International."

In the WSL, "international work" is mainly an extra-curricular activity, and at least some of its international connections have been made without directives by the NC by one comrade who uses his holidays to make political contacts outside this tight little island. Mostly the WSL should just be embarrassed by its international "co-thinkers," the contemptible Socialist League (Democratic-Centralist) [SL(DC)] of the U.S. (referred to in

INDORP as "lower-than-reformist wretches who stand in the tradition of one Albert Weisbord against Cannon and Trotsky") and the Pabloist Greek Communist International League (CIL), which last year was engaged in "unity" manoeuvres with the local USec section.

However, the WSL is not content with such small fry and is quietly stalking the big game of "the world Trotskyist movement." With his reputation and history, Thornett reasons, he should be able to reach an accommodation with Mandel & Co. or someone in the big time. Currently the WSL is entertaining leading representatives of the French Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI). (Thornett's documents inside the WRP contain sections which closely parallel the OCI conception of a strategic united front.)

While the WSL is not attracted by the total liquidation into the Labour Party of the Blick-Jenkins (British pro-OCI) group—since this would eliminate the independent cheerleading squad to hail Thornett's work at Cowley—their natural resting place in the ostensibly Trotskyist milieu would most likely be as part of an ex-IC conglomeration within the USec, centring on the American SWP. Confirmation of appetites in this direction can be seen in the *Socialist Press* (8 March) article on the recent French legislative elections, which replicates the OCI position of calling for votes to the Communist and Socialist Parties (part of the popular front Union of the Left) not only on the decisive second round of voting but on the first round as well.

A contribution to the pre-conference discussion by the WSL leadership purported to offer its orientation to "the world Trotskyist movement." The document, entitled "The Poisoned Well" [WSL] *Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 1, January 1978), presents a version of the degeneration of the Fourth International heavily flavoured by the WSL's workerist perspective. But the key, as the TF pointed out, is that:

"The entire thrust of the document 'The Poisoned Well' despite the promised amendments is to attempt to straighten out what the leadership sees as 'methodological' weaknesses of the thoroughly reformist American SWP so as to better equip it for the fight against the centrist ex-International Majority Tendency wing [of the USec]. If agreement can be reached on the uncontentious theses at the end of the document then the 'reunification' (sic) discussions can begin. *The EC [Executive Committee] of the WSL is taking the organisation down the road to liquidation into the United Secretariat.*" [emphasis in original]

—In Defence of the Revolutionary Programme

At the February conference the WSL central leadership tried to claim that the most egregiously capitulationist references to the SWP and the USec were "slips of the pen," and submitted amendments to sanitise their document. Alan Holford of the TF dismissed this by pointing out that *four single-spaced pages* of amendments hardly constituted "slips." In the debate *Socialist Press* editor Lister said that while he was not opposed in principle to characterising the USec as centrist, to say so in writing would preclude an invitation to the USec congress, thereby rendering the WSL's prospects "very small." Some prospects!

The WSL's attitude towards the Pabloist United Secretariat was accurately captured by Holford in a quote from *Tristram Shandy* which he included in his presentation as minority reporter: "Courtship consists in a number of quiet attentions, not so pointed as to alarm nor so vague as not to be understood."

A Class Line vs. Left Republicanism on Ireland

One of the consequences of the blinkered Cowley-centred economism of the Thornett leadership was that for the first three years of its existence the WSL has not had a position on the Irish



Brian Hamill

Commando mans IRA roadblock.

question—of crucial importance for any organisation with pretensions of providing revolutionary leadership to the workers of the British Isles. In order to plug this rather embarrassing gap in its programme, the leadership established an Irish Commission which was charged with developing a position for the WSL. In the course of the political struggle within the WSL three members of this four-man commission came to agreement on a class-struggle programme for Ireland paralleling the unique position of the iSt. This was presented as the Trotskyist Faction document "No Capitulation to Nationalism: For a Proletarian Perspective in Ireland!" ([WSL] *Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 13, February 1978).

In recoiling from the anti-sectarian, proletarian position of the Spartacist tendency, the WSL wholeheartedly embraced the kind of pseudo-socialist "Republican" position on Ireland common to most of the British fake-Trotskyist groupings. The Thornett leadership's document attempted to step around the difficult problem posed by the existence of the separate Protestant people (who comprise 60 percent of the population of the six counties of Northern Ireland and a quarter of the population of the island as a whole) by simply ignoring it and putting forward a call for "self-determination for the Irish people as a whole."

The TF document pointed out that such a call "is meaningless precisely because there is no sense in which we can speak of the [Irish] people as a whole," and challenged the vicarious green nationalists of the WSL leadership to "face up to the implications of such a programme. It is in effect a call for the forcible unification of the whole island by the Irish bourgeoisie irrespective of the wishes of the Protestant community," a move which "could only precipitate a bloody communal conflict offering nothing for the proletariat." The majority document clearly confirmed the WSL's alignment with mainstream petty-bourgeois Irish Republicanism:

"We do not argue as such for a united capitalist Ireland. But it must be clear that were such an unlikely development brought about in the course of struggle it would represent an historically progressive development." [emphasis in original]

—"Outlines of a Programme for Ireland," *ibid.*

The Trotskyist Faction document rejected the leadership's open support to Catholic Irish nationalism, stating that: "We are AGAINST THE FORCED UNIFICATION OF IRELAND UNDER BOURGEOIS RULE." Instead it raised the algebraic call for an Irish workers republic as part of a

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"Left" Labour members of parliament Tony Benn (left) and Michael Foot complained about coalition with Liberals, then backed Callaghan.



WV Photo

Local 1537 steelworkers rally outside Latrobe Steel Company plant.

For a Pittsburgh-Area USWA Shutdown

"No-Strike" McBride Strands Six-Month Strike at Latrobe Steel

LATROBE, Pennsylvania—Two to three thousand Pittsburgh-area trade unionists rallied here March 19 in support of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 1537 which has been on strike for the past nine months. The USWA struck Latrobe Steel last August 1 and has been out ever since demanding the basic steel package. Historically Local 1537's contracts have had the same terms as the steel giants. However, in 1975 Latrobe was bought out by the Timkin Company; when the contract expired last fall the company declared all previous agreements and arbitration decisions with the Local nullified. Thus Latrobe workers are fighting to retain many hard-won contractual gains including seniority rights, vacations, pensions, incentives, grievance procedures and many other clauses.

Workers at Latrobe represent only one section of the several-thousand-strong USWA workforce at the many small fabricating and specialty steel plants in the Pittsburgh area which have been forced out on strike since last fall. While many of these small companies supply the basic steel industry, this year management has been trying to break the tradition by which the basic steel pact is accepted as the pattern for the local negotiations. Thus, in addition to Latrobe, several thousand USWA members have been on strike since October 1 against Pullman Standard, demanding Pullman include the basic steel "task grievance" agreement in its contract. And USWA Local 7174 at Mesta Machine struck for over five months, finally backing the company down in mid-March and winning a 25 cents-per-hour increase above the basic steel pact.

Among those participating at the March 19 rally were members of the UAW, Teamsters, ILGWU, IBEW and other area trade unionists. Speaking before the crowd USWA International president Lloyd McBride was confronted by furious strikers who demanded urgently needed strike support funds from the International. In particular the strikers noted that while the bureaucracy had finally contributed \$1 million to the striking Mine Workers, it was in effect starving out the Latrobe workers with miserly strike benefits while sitting on \$100 million in the union's massive

strike fund. After these angry outbursts an embarrassed McBride left the speakers' platform, promising to "consider" the situation.

Latrobe workers must place no confidence in the treacherous McBride bureaucracy, which has hamstrung steel workers with the "no strike" ENA (Experimental Negotiating Agreement) pact. Moreover, after shoving the sellout 1977 contract down the throats of workers in Big Steel, the USWA simply left the hundreds of smaller basic steel industry feeder plants and specialty shops to negotiate on their own. Workers in basic steel must not allow the Latrobe strikers to be isolated and beaten down. One-day solidarity shut-downs of key steel plants in the Pittsburgh region would quickly bring Latrobe to its knees! Victory to the Latrobe strikers! ■

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NYC Transit Pact

"They Picked Our Pockets!"

As the 12:01 a.m. Saturday strike deadline passed while contract negotiations for 33,000 transit workers continued, what could have been the most explosive labor struggle in New York City in many years turned into a familiar late-night re-run. Making a mockery of the "no contract, no work" slogan, which is synonymous in many minds with the Transport Workers Union (TWU), the TWU Local 100 bureaucrats "stopped the clock" a half hour before the deadline so that the negotiations with the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) could drag on. The streets of the city, normally crowded with Friday night partyers and moviegoers, were already deserted as New Yorkers awaited news of the strike.

At 4 a.m. Matthew Guinan, TWU International president and Mayor Ed Koch emerged from their suites atop the plush New York Hilton surrounded by a gaggle of clubhouse cronies to announce

municipal workers whose contracts expire on June 30. While the bourgeoisie has clearly seen the necessity of salvaging New York, it is determined to make sure that the gross defeat inflicted on city workers in 1975 sticks. The prospect of a paralyzing transit strike forced Koch and Governor Carey to grant miniscule increases to the transit workers. But despite the fact that the TWU is recognized as the "pattern setter" for other municipal unions, the city is determined to give the other unions one hell of a lot less. Koch aides frankly admit: "We'll do a lesser deal with the other unions because they don't have the leverage that transit does."

Labor fakery Gotbaum and Shanker will no doubt cooperate by trying to shove whatever pathetic offers the city makes down the throats of their members. Thus, Gotbaum in open collusion with Koch for the past month was attempting to conclude negotiations



WV Photo

TWU President Guinan (left) speaking at strike rally March 26.

that an agreement had been reached—the terms of which they refused to reveal to the public. But the bourgeoisie rested easy that night in the knowledge that yet another devastating blow had been dealt the NYC labor movement.

What is in this contract that Koch describes as a "reasonable settlement" and Guinan calls a "damned good contract"? Precisely those "givebacks" that Koch demanded and that the TWU leadership claims to have resisted. The contract provides for a 6 percent increase over the last 21 months of the contract, with *no increase at all* until July 1. A \$250 lump sum payment is to "compensate" the transit workers for an 18 percent loss in buying power over the last four years! There is also the "principle" of a cost-of-living escalator which, however, was tied to productivity and which "contains no money" until mid-1979!

Finally, in order to undermine the union and avoid paying full union wages and benefits, the MTA wins the right in this sellout agreement to hire 200 part-time employees, something that the union has long opposed. This stinking giveaway contract was aptly summed up by bus driver Bruce Wright: "They picked our pockets." Even the Transit Authority bargainers, who have been through many such negotiations, had to admit that Koch had really put "the union's feet to the fire." But the transit workers themselves may yet have the final word about who winds up with hot feet.

Naturally, the bosses' press applauded the sellout agreement, while claiming that the city cannot afford to offer the same settlement to the union coalition representing more than 200,000

with the city even before the TWU contract expiration date, to undercut the ramifications of a transit strike on the subsequent city negotiations and ensure a "reasonable, uniform settlement for all transit and city workers" (i.e., *no workers should get anything!*)

Nonetheless, both the *New York Times* and the *New York Post* report widespread unhappiness with the proposed contract, and both speculate about the possibility of the ranks voting it down. But a "no" vote on this particular contract is not enough to ensure that the workers will win. Guinan & Co. have proven that they will not fight for the TWU membership, but the powerful transit workers *can* bring the city to its knees. TWU ranks must vote down this rotten "giveback" contract, stand firmly on their principle of "no contract, no work" and strike to win! ■

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The Moro Kidnapping...

(continued from page 1)

DC's "opening toward the left"—the coalition with the Socialists (PSI) in the 1960's—and was the main protagonist within the DC of bringing the Communists into the parliamentary majority during the recent cabinet crisis.

The BR has supplied a popular martyr for what may well become one of the more reactionary popular fronts in history, if the PCI has its way. Following the kidnapping, a "state of peril" was proclaimed in Rome, under a Mussolini-era law according to which anyone may be arrested without constitutional guarantees "if necessary to reestablish or preserve public order" (*L'Espresso*, 26 March). In line with demands by PCI and Socialist senators, the army was called in to conduct the investigation. And the "anti-terrorist" decree issued by Prime Minister Andreotti two days after the Moro kidnapping includes mandatory life sentences for kidnappings where a death results, legalized wiretapping, detention without a warrant and interrogation without an attorney present.

The PCI has lent enthusiastic support to these repressive measures. In open solidarity with the police, they mourned the death of Moro's *carabinieri* bodyguards killed in the assault: a wall poster signed by the PCI, Socialists and other major parties proclaims "Moro Abducted. Five Comrades Slain." As part of their active drive to organize a police union, they demand reinforcement of the "anti-terrorist" intelligence force of the secret police—the future Italian Pinochets.

Not content to limit their treachery to calls for repression of the Red Brigades, they demand similar measures against their far left opponents in the *autonomia operaia* (workers autonomy): "Certain components of the workers autonomy constitute the logistical base, the point of support for the clandestine groups.... These nuclei must be hunted down, the chains of solidarity broken," declared Communist deputy Ugo Pecchioli, the PCI's "shadow minister" of the interior (quoted in *Corriere della Sera*, 18 March).

The inevitable consequence of such measures—moves toward a bonapartist "strong state"—will be bourgeois terror aimed at the left and workers movement. This is already occurring. One of the "suspects" arrested as a supposed BR sympathizer was Francesco Berardi, an ideologist of the "autonomos" and Giuseppe Zambon (former leader of the tenants union in Milano). And on Friday a Milano judge found seven workers of the Magneti Marelli and Falk factories, who were arrested last April while target shooting, guilty of subversive activity and participation in an armed gang. The judge held that the "autonomos" were simply a mass cover for the Red Brigades (*Repubblica*, 1 April).

Despite its loyal support for capitalist rule, the PCI will not be spared the bloody suppression it demands for others on the left. It was the head of the SID (Italy's FBI) General Micelli, who was the key link in the 1970 fascist-military coup plot. Yet it is precisely the secret police which the PCI has singled out for strengthening (and of course "reorganizing" by introducing a few "democratic" officials). What folly! They should recall the fate of the German social democrats, who relied on the Prussian police to protect them from the fascists. Hiding the real lessons of the Chilean carnage—the PCI concluded it was necessary to tie the workers to an even larger sector of the bourgeoisie through the super-popular front of the "historic compromise" with the DC—the Italian Communists are laying the groundwork for brutal repression of the working class at the

hands of "democratic" butchers.

The turn toward terrorism as a political weapon is in large part a reaction to the PCI's complete abandonment of even a pretense of class-struggle politics. The PCI, which kept the minority Christian Democrat government in power over the last months by abstaining on key issues in parliament, now actively backs the new DC government in exchange for a formal role in shaping legislation. The popular front has now been formally constituted; the PCI has passed from the antechamber of the "historic compromise" to the reception hall. In return the PCI is expected to deliver the unions for the austerity program which the PCI itself supports: cuts in pensions, holding down wages, reducing imports, higher taxes.

The Italian bourgeoisie has been unable to deal with one of the worst unemployment rates in the industrialized West, particularly among the youth. A combative working class has wrested significant concessions, managing to keep pace with the soaring cost of living. In the political vacuum left by the reformists' open betrayals, terrorism and political nihilism has flourished among the semi-lumpenized young proletarians and students.

Red Brigades: New Left Maoist Anarcho-Terrorism

The bourgeois and PCI press is filled with speculation about sinister rightist forces and foreign spy agencies mixed up in the Moro kidnapping. Some argue that the precision of the abduction was definitely German, reminiscent of last fall's Schleyer kidnapping by the Red Army Faction (RAF—the so-called "Baader-Meinhof gang"). Right-wingers accuse the KGB, while Communist leaders see the hand of the CIA and recall Washington's attempt to "destabilize" Chile at the time of Allende's 1970 election (by assassinating the head of the army). The PSI tops, however, are convinced it's the Czechs.

These "hypotheses"—whether advanced by the PCI or by the "far left" (including the French LCR's *Rouge* of 21 March)—are simply an excuse to join in or capitulate to the bourgeois "anti-terrorist" outcry. The action was clearly timed to coincide with the opening of the much-postponed Red Brigades trial in Torino. (Renato Curcio, the 33-year-old BR leader, and 14 of his comrades are imprisoned while a number of others have escaped or have never been caught and are being tried in absentia on charges of committing 30 kidnappings and 55 robberies. In addition the 49 defendants were accused of "forming an armed organization with the intent of overthrowing Italy's political, economic and social institutions.") As for the politics of the Red Brigades, they are clearly of New Left origins, expressed in a sociologese reminiscent of C. Wright Mills, infused with despair of the working class:

"They know there will be no imminent mass uprising in Italy, no storming of the Bastille, so they have chosen urban guerrilla warfare as a means to promote revolution."

—BR lawyer di Giovanni, quoted in *New York Times*, 30 March

The Red Brigades' first actions were closely tied to northern Italian factories where there has been a history of sharp clashes between a hated management and the rebellious workforce. Thus from 1969 to 1978 at the SIT-Siemens factory in Milano there have been four managers kidnapped, two armed actions, 18 automobiles of management personnel destroyed, four shootings and a colossal fire. Other factories where there have been fires and kidnappings claimed by the BR include Alfa Romeo (Milano) and Magneti Marelli (Genova). The Brigades have also executed several ultra-rightist and fascist thugs.

Following the detention of a number of BR leaders the level of violence escalated. Arrested in September 1974, Curcio was freed from prison in February 1975 by a commando headed by his

wife, then re-arrested the next June. A year later the attorney general of Genova was assassinated by the Red Brigades. In February 1978 the Roman magistrate in charge of prisons for political detainees was shot down, and five days before the Moro kidnapping the Torino police inspector formerly in charge of intelligence and secret police was killed by the BR.

The targets of the Red Brigades have been the property, leading personnel and armed guards of the bourgeoisie. Although they call for international coordination among the "Fighting Communist Organizations," presumably including the likes of the German RAF, the BR have not been visibly tied with nationalist terrorists such as the Palestinian PFLP, nor have they taken credit for criminal acts of indiscriminate terror (such as the hijacking of a Lufthansa airliner in connection with the RAF's Schleyer kidnapping).

The Communist Party, however, seeks to lump the autonomos, anarchist-Maoist terrorists and the nihilistic "metropolitan Indians" together with the fascists as "criminals" and "enemies of the democratic state." Aside from the PCI's slanderous equation of leftists with ultra-reactionaries and its inveterate obscuring of the class line (between the violence of groups linked to the workers movement and the violence of the bourgeoisie), there are fundamental distinctions between anti-PCI New Leftism and nihilistic rage.

Both the Red Brigades and the diverse organizations and groupings loosely associated as "workers autonomy" can rightly be considered the products of the "class of '69." Born of a hatred of the slick class-collaboration of the PCI, which frustrated the mass upsurge of the "hot autumn" of 1969, these groups represent the evolution of New Leftism in the absence of a renewed working-class rebellion. The BR, who trace their origins to the sociology department of the University of Trento and the radicalized Catholic youth movement, turned to terrorist attacks on representatives of the bourgeoisie out of frustration at the seemingly unshakable Stalinist stranglehold on the Italian working class.

Similarly, the *autonomia operaia* groups grew out of the inability to consolidate a revolutionary opposition to the PCI in the trade unions, thus producing anti-trade-union workerism and a penchant for adventurist street confrontations with the police. The "metropolitan Indians," on the other hand, represent the total decomposition of the New Left into violent anti-working-class lumpen rage. The failure of any of the "far left" groups to oppose the PCI's popular frontism allowed these potentially dangerous anti-political nihilists access to masses of students and Italy's hundreds of thousands of perennially unemployed youth. A year ago we commented on the ominous potential of this decomposed New Leftism:

"With their anti-union impulses, petty-bourgeois rage and glorification of lumpenism the 'Metropolitan Indians' quite conceivably could spawn significant recruits for the fascists, even though at present a blood line separates them."

—"Student Strikes Rock Italy," *Young Spartacus* No. 53, April 1977

"Far Left" Grovels

The most notable effect of the BR's actions has been stabilizing and unifying the government and providing it with the pretext for vicious repression of the left. Under the pressure of bourgeois hysteria, most of the "far left" has buckled under. Some have equivocated, like Lotta Continua, coming out "...against fear, against the blackmail of the Red Brigades and that of the State." Unable to take sides between the capitalist state and the unpopular terrorists, they denounced both:

"We totally condemn the means, the objectives and the political conception of the 'brigatisti', which is based on terror. But we refuse to build, on this

state, the social basis for an increasingly repressive regime."

—quoted in *Le Monde*, 22 March
Appropriately, they called for an exchange of Moro for BR leader Curcio.

The Italian section of the "United Secretariat of the Fourth International," Livio Maitan's Gruppi Comunisti Rivoluzionari (GCR), was, if anything, even worse, parroting the PCI's accusations against the BR and solidarizing with the "anti-terrorism" campaign in a revolting display of political cowardice:

"Whether the Red Brigades were direct participants, or if on the contrary they only provided a political cover for an action taken by others, this does not affect their political condemnation, which must now be total...."

"The kidnapping of Aldo Moro and its political exploitation, which unequivocally bear the stamp of the right, make necessary a powerful workers mobilization."

—*Rouge*, 20 March

The GCR, which for years recruited on the basis of unadulterated Guevarism; which uncritically applauded the spectacular 1974 assassination of Franco premier Carrero Blanco; which mindlessly cheered on acts of indefensible terror against innocent civilians by Irish and Palestinian nationalists; now unveils its true political appetites. Enthusiastic advocates of terror elsewhere, when it occurs closer to home they rush headlong into the arms of their "own" bourgeoisie as soon as the predictable "anti-terrorist" demagoguery begins.

In contrast to the GCR's hypocritical capitulation, some leftists in Italy took a principled and courageous stance. The Gruppo Bolscevico-Leninista of Umbria, which broke from the GCR in opposition to voting for reformist workers parties in a popular front—not to be confused with the GBL d'Italia, which supports voting for the working-class components of such a bourgeois political formation—forthrightly defended the BR against the bourgeois state (in a leaflet dated 16 March), while correctly pointing out the futility of individual terror:

"The actions of the BR not only serve as a pretext for the state to launch attacks on the left, but also promote a further dispersal of the proletariat and its vanguard. Instead of spurring the workers onto the road of class struggle, these actions condemn them to passivity and observation from afar."

"But at this time we do not turn our backs on the terrorist militants in an accusatory and criminal manner. Honest revolutionaries must not flee (as do

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Ontario Cops Rampage...

(continued from page 12)

legal and financial assistance and a pressure campaign to force the Big Three auto companies not to handle scab goods. But when Essex brought a \$600,000 lawsuit against the UAW in December, the International capitulated completely, rushing in to impose substantially the same terms the strikers had been offered before they walked out the previous spring. And after the strike was broken only 50 of the 200 strikers were hired back at the plant, with the rest to trickle back "as needed."

The UAW bigshots care little about the horrible conditions which prevail in hundreds of small parts supplier plants. UAW militants must not allow the Fleck strike to be abandoned or strangled, as the Essex walkout was. With continued militant support from other UAW locals, the Fleck workers can win far more than the pittance that the union is presently asking for. The bosses have decided to turn the Fleck strike into a test of strength with organized labor in southern Ontario. The UAW must use its tremendous industrial muscle to win this strike and to make Fleck a spearhead in a drive to bring the thousands of other unorganized workers in small auto parts shops into the union at full Big Three rates. Victory to the Fleck Strike! ■

The Moro Kidnapping...

(continued from page 9)

the cowards of the Italian left) from the obligation to defend ALL the left against the state and its bestial repression. We openly and forcefully affirm that the demand of freedom for the victims of white terror is an irrevocable component of our communist program."

Bourgeois justice in Italy does not pretend to be neutral. General Miceli got off scot-free for his role in the 1970 "Rosa dei Venti" conspiracy in league with "black prince" Valerio Borghese. The fascist murderer who gunned down a Lotta Continua militant last September escaped punishment, while the slain leftist's comrades were sentenced to one-and-a-half years in prison. Red Brigade member Massimo Maraschi was sentenced to 30 years—he was held "morally responsible" for a shootout with police which occurred while he was in jail! Furthermore, the BR leaders' lives are in danger every moment they remain in the bourgeoisie's jails. Free the imprisoned BR leaders!

The capitalist class has used the rise in left-wing figures to launch the current anti-terrorist hysteria. For years the escalating terrorism of the fascist MSI met with only routine police round-ups which rarely even came to trial—there are still an estimated 300 right-wing thugs under arrest. Since 1976, however, groups such as the BR have tried to single-handedly even the score with the marauding fascist scum. Despairing of any mobilization of the proletariat, the Italian anarcho-terrorists stepped up their attacks—sacking 122 Christian Democratic party offices in the first ten months of last year alone.

Leninists have always opposed individual terrorism. From the time of the Russian Marxists' polemic against the Narodniks, who sought to bring down tsarism by bombing the tsars, to the present where authentic Trotskyists opposed Guevarist guerrillism, our method has always been the class struggle, reliance on the working masses. When much of the left was hailing the random, indiscriminate terror practiced by nationalists such as the Palestinian PFLP, who specialize in airport massacres and hijacking innocent passengers, we denounced it as criminal and indefensible. But where terrorist acts have been directed against the class enemy—out of hatred for capitalism—the Spartacist League has never flinched from defending those militants from the organized terror of the capitalist state. As Trotsky wrote:

"If we nevertheless reject terrorist acts, it is not because we do not recognize the right to revenge, but instead because individual revenge is insufficient. The bill we have to settle with the capitalist world order is too large to present to a vulgar government official with the title of minister. To understand all the crimes against mankind and all the disgraces to human dignity as the products of a social system, in order to bring together all our force in collective struggle against this system—that is the path whereby the most flaming desire for revenge can find its highest moral satisfaction."

The attraction of futile and substitutionist terror for dedicated young militants in Italy is only possible in the absence of a revolutionary party capable of mobilizing the working masses toward a seizure of state power and establishment of proletarian rule—the only alternative to the social rot of Italy's decaying capitalism. ■

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Labor Skates Witchhunt Militants at British Leyland

Defend Alan Thornett!

LONDON—In an unprecedented move which, if successful, would constitute a major defeat for car workers in Britain, officials of the Transport and General Workers Union (T&GWU) in Oxford have recommended that Alan Thornett (leader of the centrist Workers Socialist League—WSL) and eight other union militants at the Cowley plant of British Leyland automobiles be expelled from membership in the union for "bringing the union into disrepute." The local labour skates have also carefully included in their lineup two noted right wingers, Reg Parsons and Cy Blake, in a transparent attempt to give the witch-hunt against the left the appearance of impartiality.

"Bringing the union into disrepute" is the standard catch-all charge used universally to pillory trade-union militants. In fact, this attack on the left is being made at this time because the company and its union henchmen are afraid of opposition to the layoff and speed-up scheme recently announced by Michael Edwardes, chief executive of the state-owned British Leyland automobile enterprise. The "Edwardes Plan" calls for "a gradual reduction in the number of workers required to produce a given number of vehicles." It is estimated that this will mean in practise plant closings and the elimination of 12,500 jobs in 1978 and thousands more in 1979 and 1980.

The recommendations for disciplinary action arose out of an "enquiry" held by the T&GWU's Oxford District Finances and General Purposes Committee last November. The enquiry was

nothing short of a kangaroo court. The hand-picked Regional and District bureaucrats who laid the charges also conducted the hearings and recommended the final sentences! The final decisions have not yet been announced.

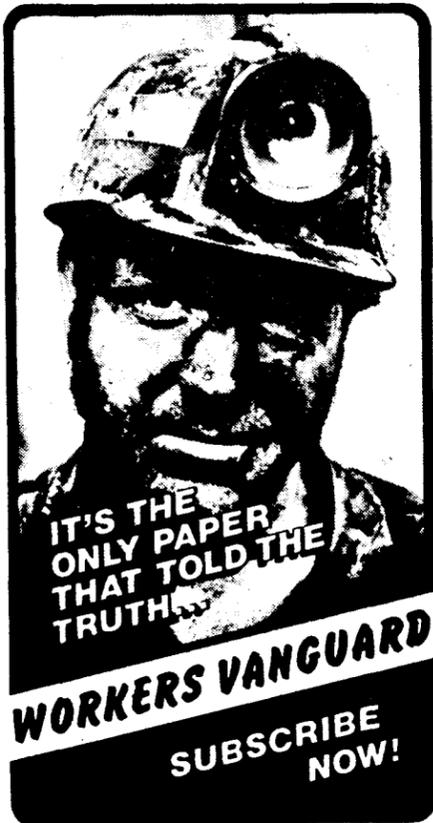
It is clear that management and its labour lieutenants are determined to oust Thornett and the amorphous left wing which constitutes the major opposition at the key Cowley plant to Leyland's "rationalisation" scheme. With some 100,000 cars in stock, management feels confident that it will be able to withstand any strike waged in Thornett's defense. (Leyland may have less to worry about from Thornett than it imagines. Although the workers in his branch expressed strong sentiment for a one-day strike in support of the victimised militants, Thornett, capitulating to the wishes of left bureaucrat Bobby Fryer, called it off. This cowardly action was criticised even in the press of the WSL.)

Alan Thornett has been a shop steward in the Cowley plant for the past 16 years. He is also chairman of the T&GWU 5/293 Branch. In May 1974 Leyland management withdrew negotiating facilities from him and refused to recognise him as an elected trade-union representative, and after a massive red-scare campaign in the bourgeois press the leadership of the T&GWU held fresh elections in which Thornett lost his post as deputy convenor. But last December he was reelected in a shop-floor ballot—and still management refused to recognise him, yet the union tops did nothing to secure his recognition! We demand that the T&GWU drop all charges against Thornett and the other stewards, halt the disciplinary hearings and immediately mobilise the full weight of the union to defeat management's attempts to decide who shall or shall not represent the Cowley workforce.

The defence of the Cowley stewards depends on the ability of the victimised militants to mobilise the ranks in their support. In situations such as this, where obvious violations of elementary democratic procedures are occurring, there is pressure to fight the union's bureaucratism through the bourgeois courts. In fact, Frank Corti, one of the nine militants and Secretary of the T&GWU 5/293, has already attempted—unsuccessfully—to force cancellation of the disciplinary hearings by means of a High Court injunction on the grounds that such hearings would be "biased" and "unfair." Taking the union into the capitalist courts is asking the class enemy to meddle in the affairs of the workers movement—and even to arbitrate intra-union disputes! The bourgeois state will not protect union democracy but simply further subordinate the labour movement to the ruling class. All class-conscious militants must reject such treacherous "tactics."

While sharply disagreeing with the minimal trade unionism passed off by Thornett as the programme of revolutionary Trotskyism, the Spartacist League (British section of the international Spartacist tendency) recognises that should Leyland management or its local labour cronies succeed in driving Thornett out of the T&GWU and consequently out of Cowley, this would constitute an important defeat for British workers. Class-struggle militants must support the Cowley workers against this management-backed offensive.

Drop the charges! Halt the disciplinary hearings! No reliance on the courts! The T&GWU must force Leyland to recognise Thornett now! ■



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The Rebirth of British Trotskyism...

(continued from page 7)

socialist federation of the British Isles. The TF stated clearly that the struggle to unite the Protestant and Catholic working people across sectarian lines must be premised on inflexible opposition to the continuing oppression of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, and also on a fight for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. However, the TF document added:

"...the removal of the troops, unless a class-conscious proletariat led by a revolutionary party is able to intervene, may well be the occasion for enormous sectarian slaughter (as occurred in India after independence) but as Marxists we must reject out of hand the reformist proposition that imperialist troops can ever be a fundamental guarantee against barbarism. The continuation of British imperialism's military occupation of the north is even more inimical to the prospect for socialism than the slaughter which might follow its departure."

—"For a Proletarian Perspective in Ireland!"

In the debate on Ireland at the conference one Thornett supporter after another rose to speak in defence of the majority's sketchy but clearly Catholic nationalist document, yet felt it necessary to preface their remarks by admitting they knew little about Ireland. In contrast, the position of the Trotskyist Faction, drawing on the considerable collective experience of its members in the struggle in Ireland, was presented by Paul Lannigan, a former member of the Irish National Committee of Healy's SLL from 1968 to 1970. Lannigan, who had first-hand experience in recruiting Protestant shop stewards in Derry to the SLL, opposed the leadership's "socialist" green nationalism, which effectively denies the possibility of revolutionaries being able to win Protestant workers to an anti-sectarian, socialist programme.

Mass Work Fakery, Menshevism and Bundism in Turkey

With the exception of its loose ties to the Greek CIL and the American SL(DC), the WSL's only work outside Britain has taken place in Turkey. Beginning with a few Turkish members recruited from the WRP, the WSL recruited a handful of raw militants and established two small branches in Turkey. In every respect the Turkish work was a criminal fiasco as a minuscule grouping of politically uneducated militants attempted to translate the WSL's "mass work" approach from chummy England into the harsh reality of Turkish society where labour and leftist militants are regularly set upon and often murdered by fascist thugs.

The Trotskyist Faction recruited two members of the WSL's Turkish group in London who recounted the bitter experience of a strike (for union recognition) sparked by the Turkish WSLers: "We were totally ill-prepared to give even good trade union leadership to back up our advice to these workers" ("Enough of Opportunism, Adventur-

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ism, Bundism: For a Trotskyist Perspective in Turkey," [WSL] *Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 12, February 1978). The WSL leadership wasn't taken aback. True, the majority document admitted, "... the strike was isolated, was broken, and all the strikers were sacked." However, "Though the battle was lost, our comrades were developed and new contacts won" ([WSL] *Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 6, February 1978)!

Having experienced the dead end posed by the WSL's economist activism, these two militants came to fundamental agreement with the Trotskyist Faction's insistence on the centrality of programmatic clarity and the struggle to educate and recruit cadre as key to building the revolutionary party. Thus the TF Turkish document attacked the leadership's Bundist approach to the national question as applied to the Kurds (a national minority presently divided among Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria and the USSR). According to the WSL majority the Kurds must achieve "national unity first," i.e., the establishment of a bourgeois Kurdistan; consequently Kurdish workers living in Turkey must be organised into a separate Kurdish party. Recognising the Kurds' right to self-determination, the TF document attacked this Bundist organisational norm and Menshevik two-stage strategy.

On the thorny Cyprus question the faction took a clear internationalist position:

"Up until 1974, the Turkish population of Cyprus was nationally oppressed by the Greek population—since the invasion by the Turkish army, the Greeks have been in the more oppressed position. Because the two populations have been thoroughly intermingled on this small island it is clear that the reality of 'self-determination' for either people can only come at the expense of the other and thus 'self-determination' is not applicable. We call therefore for the withdrawal of all foreign troops (whether Turk, Greek, UN, NATO, or any other) and for the unity of Greek and Turkish working peoples of Cyprus to overthrow capitalism and establish a workers state under the leadership of a Trotskyist party."

—“Enough of Opportunism, Adventurism, Bundism...”

Thornett "Counterattacks"

For the longest time the Thornett leadership sought to ignore the internationalist Spartacist tendency. After a year's procrastination, the WSL's sometime resident literary dilettante, Alan Westoby, finally produced a draft reply to the June 1976 iSt letter. This work was so blatantly unserious that the WSL NC rejected it in summer 1977. Since Westoby had left the organisation to pursue his "theoretical" activity, the job of drafting a new reply was commissioned out to someone else—whose work was rejected for being too soft on the iSt. Finally leadership loyalists like John Lister and Tony Richardson produced their own reply—with a little help from their friends in the Murray clique. This shoddy document laconically remarks in the introduction: "In compiling this material we have drawn on notes supplied by cdes. Steve Murray and Julia Kellett, though neither comrade has seen the completed document."

(Having rejected the Trotskyist Faction's comprehensive political critique of the hardened right-centrist Thornett leadership, the Murray group slid into ignominious disarray at the national conference, with faction members splitting their votes and one even voting for a TF document. With a chronology reminiscent of the career of the vile Tim ["I was a hatchet man for Healy and Hansen"] Wohlforth, Mur-

ray's fence-straddling and unprincipled bloc with Thornett earned him only the political contempt of some of his own factional partners [and no doubt of the Thornett supporters as well].)

The Lister-Richardson-Murray "reply" is a broken record stuck on the single refrain that the iSt is "sectarian" because we recognise that "a currently embryonic party organisation must necessarily constitute itself in the form of a 'fighting propaganda group'" and we frankly state that the character of our trade-union work must be "exemplary," rejecting the workerist notion of intervening in every daily struggle of the masses. "What type of forces will such a stand attract?" the Thornett group asks rhetorically, answering: "Talkers, debaters, and those disillusioned with struggle for leadership within workers' organisations..." ([WSL] *Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 5, February 1978). At another point they wax indignant: "Your refusal to fight to recruit workers... means that your role is reduced to that of political vultures, preying on other tendencies on the left."

This absurd charge—reminiscent of Wohlforth at his nadir, when sputtering for lack of anything to say he would charge that Spartacists "hate the workers"—is consummate dishonesty coming from authors who are not unfamiliar with *Workers Vanguard*. But at least the Thornett supporters make clear what it is they object to: the authors complain that the London Spartacist Group interventions in WSL public meetings "seem determined to cut across any dialogue with [workers who attend these meetings] and drive them away from the WSL, turning every meeting into a debate on the most abstract level."

And just what are these "abstract" topics of debate? The same points that were the axis of the TF faction fight: the need to break from Labourism and illusions in the Labour "lefts"; the need for a proletarian strategy in Ireland, to draw the class line against popular frontism. This is too "abstract" for the Thornett group because they seek to recruit politically raw workers at their present level of consciousness, i.e., militant trade unionism. We, however, aspire to recruit workers who despise the IMG's line of Menshevik "unity" or the SWP's refusal to defend the gains of the October Revolution.

The authors of the leadership "reply" to the iSt get carried away with their self-righteous rhetoric about how the Spartacists would be repelled by the "action of thousands and millions of workers mobilised in practical struggles around its [the Transitional Programme's] demands." We are anxiously waiting to hear how the WSL has managed to mobilise these "thousands and millions of workers" around even its reformist minimum program for the unions. In fact, at the conference Thornett admitted that the WSL had been unable to play much of a role in the firemen's strike because the much larger Cliffite SWP stood in the way. What the WSL did *not* do in this situation is polemicise against the SWP. As for trade-union implantation, the WSL has no significant fraction outside Cowley. This compares to the SL/U.S. which gives political support to active groups of class-struggle unionists among dock workers and warehousemen, steel workers, car workers, phone workers and seamen.

The one issue which seems to have stung the WSL central leadership into something resembling a political defence is the question of voting for popular front candidates and the nature of a workers government. John Lister's document, "What the Fourth Congress of the Comintern Really Decided" ([WSL] *Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 3, February 1978), is really just an attempt to institutionalise the confusion sown by Zinoviev and Radek in that discussion. If the WSL really wants to say that it considers a Labour Party cabinet resting on a majority in

Parliament to be a "workers government"—this is one of Zinoviev's five variants—they are free to do so. We would only remind them of the company they are travelling in. One Pierre Frank, in a commemorative article on the Transitional Programme (*International Socialist Review*, May-June 1967), congratulated the Pabloist United Secretariat in having "revived and enriched" the concept of workers government to mean something other than the dictatorship of the proletariat. As for the Spartacist tendency, it stands on the "unrevised" programme of Trotsky's Fourth International, which states:

"This formula, 'workers' and farmers' government', first appeared in the agitation of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and was definitely accepted after the October Revolution. In the final instance it represented nothing more than the popular designation for the already established dictatorship of the proletariat...."

"When the Comintern of the epigones tried to revive the formula buried by history of the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry', it gave to the formula of the 'workers' and peasants' government' a completely different, purely 'democratic', i.e., bourgeois content, counterposing it to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Bolshevik-Leninists resolutely rejected the slogan of the 'workers' and peasants' government' in the bourgeois-democratic version."

—*The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*

A slightly more serious attempt to deal with the question was made by Clinton, Hyde and White (a trio whose opening shots in the political struggle in the WSL were their arguments that the police deserved a "sliding scale of wages"). Their document ("Strategy and Tactics—A Reply to Our Petty Bourgeois Critics," [WSL] *Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 10, February 1978) prints pages of citations to argue that Trotsky in the 1930's did not take an explicit position against voting for the workers parties in a popular front. What these scholastic "theoreticians" ignore is that Trotsky faced situations in France and Spain which were pre-revolutionary, with parliamentary and electoral tactics quite secondary in the context of massive factory occupations and direct military struggle with the fascists. In France Trotsky urgently and repeatedly called for the formation of committees of action (in the context of a strike wave) as the vehicle for breaking the workers from the popular front and splitting the reformist parties.

Our snide academics don't mention this, nor does the WSL present any programmatic axis for struggle against the reformist parties and against bourgeois coalitionism. On the contrary it makes a ritual denunciation of the Lib-Lab coalition... and then promises to vote for Labour anyway. If ever there were a case of sterile propagandism, this is it. The French Pabloists were consistent, at least, in refusing to characterise the Union of the Left as a popular front; should they do so, said the Mandelites, "This would lead logically to abstention in the [1977] municipal elections" (quoted in *International*, Summer 1977).

The WSL's own policy—refusing to vote for coalitionist candidates only if joint Liberal-Labour slates are presented—is a purely juridical conception of the bloc, which implicitly or explicitly denies the essential fact: that the popular front is a *bourgeois* political formation. The left oppositionist document on the workers government slogan answered this subterfuge in advance with a quotation from Trotsky:

"The question of questions at present is the People's Front. The left centrists seek to present this question as a tactical or even as a technical manoeuvre so as to be able to practice their little business in the shadow of the People's Front. In reality the People's Front is the main question of proletarian class strategy for this epoch. It offers the best criterion for the difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism...."

—“Letter to the RSAP,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1935-36*

The heart of the Clinton-Hyde-White document is unadulterated class baiting: e.g., "They appeal to tired petty bourgeois members who prefer academic debate to the class struggle..." Etc. What drives these three (who, by the way, are themselves teachers) into a frenzy is the Trotskyist Faction's rejection of the guilty workerism which passes for politics in the WSL. Attempting to be condescending, they only articulate their own philistinism. Moreover, when they finally get around to justifying their all-purpose slogan "make the lefts fight," their mystical glorification of the "daily grind" spells itself out in the language of frank opportunism:

"Until such time as significant sections of workers look to alternative revolutionary leaders, we must take the workers through the experience of trying and testing the alternatives that exist."

—“Strategy and Tactics...”

Just as revolutionaries begin with the objective needs of the proletariat rather than its present consciousness in formulating their program, we do not "take" the proletariat through the experience of reformism. If they have not yet broken from the Stalinist and social-democratic misleaders we must indeed accompany them through the experience of *exposing* these betrayers. But the WSL does indeed mean to take British workers through a new experience of reformism—first the Callaghans and Healeys, then the Foots and Benns, and then...

Results and Prospects

In describing the loss of 20 percent of its active membership as "A Step Forward" (*Socialist Press*, 22 February), the Workers Socialist League declares its firm intent to continue in its ostrich-like position. As a result of the split by the Trotskyist Faction it has been reduced to a national network of supporters of Alan Thornett's activities at the Cowley Leyland plant (reverently dubbed "The Factory" by the WSL leadership). The loss of a sizeable number of younger comrades has clearly stung them, as has the departure of a layer of experienced cadres; and the haemorrhaging of the WSL has not stopped yet.

For the international Spartacist tendency, the fusion with the comrades of the TF greatly increases the authority of our Trotskyist programme, in Britain and internationally. In Britain today there is one—and only one—organisation which intransigently fights coalitionism, opposes all brands of nationalism and is part of a democratic centralist international tendency: the Spartacist League.

One parting reply to the WSL's embarrassingly empty class baiting: we do not wish to begrudge Alan Thornett his unstinting dedication to defending the interests of the Cowley workers as he perceives them. Under the proper leadership of a disciplined Trotskyist party such mass leaders can perform a crucial role in preparing the working class for revolutionary struggle. But such a party will be far different from the support apparatus for one or a group of trade unionists (the most degenerated example of the latter being the Ceylonese "section" of the USec, which is nothing more than an appendage of a conservative white collar union run by the corrupt Bala Tampoe). It must be a party whose Marxist programme is formulated and tested through the kind of political struggle which the WSL has systematically avoided, whether in the factories, in mass demonstrations, public meetings or the party itself.

Yes, the WSL conference was indeed a step forward—for Trotskyism and the international Spartacist tendency. It was a savage blow, however, to the pretensions of the parochial workerists from the South Midlands of little England. ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Shut Down Fleck with Mass Pickets

Ontario Cops Rampage Against UAW Strikers

TORONTO, March 31—Dressed in full battle gear, 140 club-wielding provincial police charged a picket line of 100 members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) at the Fleck Manufacturing Ltd. in Huron Park, (southwestern Ontario) yesterday. Smashing their way through the picketers and injuring bystanders with their riot sticks, these armed strikebreaking thugs moved in to dismantle a barricade of cars set up by union militants to block the entrance of the struck plant.

Six people were arrested and dozens injured during the cop assault. Directed by helicopter, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) onslaught imposed a virtual state of seige in tiny Huron Park as the cops blocked off all routes into town to head off UAW members from neighboring areas who were reportedly on their way to the picket lines. All traffic came to a standstill and schools in the area were closed; one woman reported it took her hours to convince police at three successive roadblocks to let her through the barriers and return to her home.

For most of the day rampaging cops terrorized workers and local residents alike as they careened through the industrial area rounding up strikers and swinging their billy clubs at anything that could move. Time and again picketers were knocked to the ground by the cops, pinned down, kicked and beaten, then thrown bleeding into the paddy wagons and carted away. One *London [Ontario] Free Press* reporter was smacked in the ribs with a three-foot riot baton. And Jack Pawson, a Toronto UAW organizer who witnessed the scene, told the *Free Press* (31 March), "This looks more like Nazi Germany than Canada. I'm speechless at seeing this happen."

The 80 workers at Fleck, who manufacture auto-wiring systems, have been on strike since March 6, demanding their first UAW contract. The strikers, mainly women, face a management committed to maintaining the standards of a 19th-century sweatshop in their factory. Fleck employees work in unsafe, unsanitary conditions at well below poverty-level wages. The base rate at Fleck is a miserable \$2.85 an hour rising to \$3.24 after ten years!

The union leadership's wage demand in the strike (a starting wage of \$3.20, rising to \$3.95/hour over three years) would still leave Fleck workers making less than half the amount received by most auto workers. In addition the union is demanding a compulsory dues check-off. But even these paltry demands have been turned down by the company which has offered its employees an insulting 10 cents an hour for each year of the contract.

The Fleck workers have vigorously resisted all attempts by the company, cops and scabs to break their strike. Enlisting the help of several hundred

fellow UAW members from locals across southwestern Ontario, strikers have repeatedly defended their picket line against the cops who daily attempt to shepherd a busload of scabs into the plant. While the provincial police have sent contingents of up to 200 armed scab-herders to the picket line, mass picketing has successfully shut down production three times.

The strike has sharply polarized Huron Park between a handful of scabs and the strikers, their families and supporters. The determination of the UAW unionists has produced a steady depletion in the ranks of the scabs. One strikebreaker who decided to stop crossing the picket lines told reporters: "The tension was unbelievable. I was really in fear of my life."

The company and their armed scab-herders in blue are clearly determined to try to bust the union. One of the more ominous developments in the strike occurred when cops raided the offices of the *London Free Press* (an area daily) on March 15 seizing over 150 photographs to obtain material for the prosecution of three militants arrested after a car which injured two picketers was overturned and "totaled" March 14. To counter sympathy for the overwhelmingly female strikers, the police have employed some 40 women cops. However, for the most part the police have relied on their riot clubs and jackboots in their war against the heroic and frequently outnumbered pickets.

McDermott's Militant Grandstanding

The UAW's Canadian Director, Dennis McDermott (heir-apparent to the presidency of the Canadian Labour Congress [CLC]), has seized upon the Fleck strike as an opportunity to boost his credentials as a "fighter." Playing up the direct link between the Ontario government and the company—which was founded by Deputy Minister James Fleck and is still half-owned by his wife and daughter—McDermott thundered against the strike-breaking role of the provincial cops. McDermott told reporters, "If Mister Kerr [Ontario solicitor general] can't control the OPP and if he doesn't do something to stop the abuse of women on the picket line by the police, the UAW will show him how to do it" (*Globe and Mail*, March 10).

But as one Ford worker from Talbotville remarked when asked about McDermott's support for the strike: "He's never been out himself." Another strike supporter recalled how McDermott denounced the "goon squad" of Talbotville militants when they closed down their plant a day before the "official" beginning of the November 1976 Canadian Ford strike. "We're living up to our reputation" in coming out to support the Fleck strike, the Talbotville militant told *WV*.



Bill Ironside/London Free Press

Ontario cops grab UAW picket in front of Fleck plant at Huron Park.

Picketers also reported that the Oakville Ford plant, 20 miles outside of Toronto, has continued using scab wiring from the Fleck plant throughout the strike. It is a telling indictment of the McDermott leadership that it has not only failed to mobilize enough union support to shut down Fleck, but also allows UAW members to handle scab products! Militants must demand that McDermott and the UAW International declare a complete ban on handling wiring manufactured at Fleck for the duration of the strike.

Shut Down Fleck With Mass Pickets!

For the Fleck workers who are daily battling the scabs and the cops, victory depends on the solidarity of their union brothers and sisters and mass mobilizations on the picket lines to shut the plant down tight! UAW militants must demand that bus loads of pickets be dispatched daily to Fleck. The company has threatened to get a court injunction to bar mass picketing, but as the striking U.S. coal miners recently proved, militant trade-union solidarity can turn any such injunction into a worthless scrap of paper.

Fleck workers must beware of any maneuvers by the UAW tops to abandon them or weaken the much-needed solidarity pickets. Already the union officials have eagerly accepted a proposal by Tory provincial labor minister Bette Stephenson to cool the strikers off with a moratorium on cops, scabs and picketing while a bogus government

advisory board met to make recommendations on ending the strike. Much to the disappointment of the UAW brass the Fleck bosses turned down the government's proposal.

During the April 4 CLC convention session, Bob White, slated to succeed McDermott as UAW Canadian director, announced that due to Ford's refusal to stop using scab Fleck products at Oakville, he would shut down that plant. But when asked just how and when Oakville would be closed White replied that the union would use an "Apache" strategy and refused to say anything more. Fleck workers must place no faith in McDermott's and White's bombast, remembering that Solidarity House's "Apache" tactics in 1972 were a powerless series of short mini-strikes aimed at allowing auto-workers to blow off some steam while avoiding a real confrontation with the speed-up sweeping General Motors assembly plants. These "Apache" fake-strikes allowed bitter strikes at GM's Norwood and Lordstown plants to drag on isolated for months and end in defeat.

The situation at Fleck vividly recalls last year's tragic nine-month strike of predominantly women auto workers at Essex Incorporated in Elwood, Indiana. Miserably underpaid, the women walked out in April 1977 and for months they fought against trigger-happy armed guards, who shot and permanently disabled one striker, and scab-herding police. Solidarity House "promised"

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