



Fight clerical reaction! For proletarian political revolution! Polish workers move

Everyone predicted it was coming. A restive, combative working class, peasant strikes, massive foreign debt, chronic and widespread food shortages, a powerful and increasingly assertive Catholic church, the burgeoning of social-democratic and clerical-nationalist oppositional groupings. All the elements were there. Poland in the late '70s was locked in a deepening crisis heading toward explosion, an explosion which could bring either proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy or capitalist counterrevolution led by Pope Wojtyla's church.

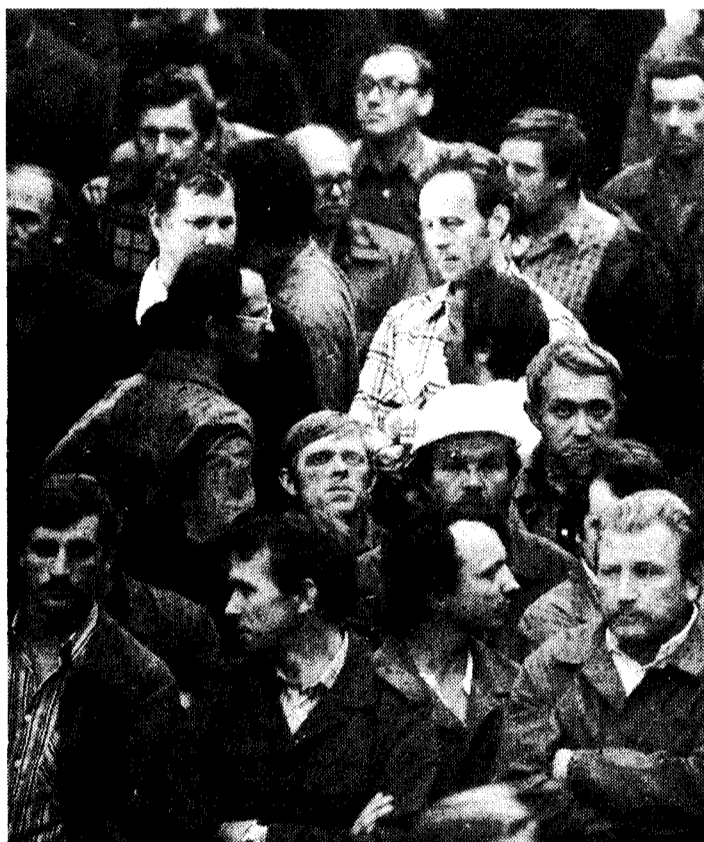
And when it came it gripped world attention for two solid weeks. The Baltic coast general strike was the most powerful mobilization of the power of the working class since France May 1968. But was it a mobilization for working-class power? That is the decisive question.

Now there is a settlement *on paper*. The Polish workers have forced the bureaucracy to agree to "new self-governing trade unions" with the pledge that these recognize "the leading role" of the Communist party and do not engage in political activities. Insofar as the settlement enhances the Polish workers' power to struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy, revolutionaries can support the strike and its outcome. But only a blind man could fail to see the gross influence of the Catholic church and also pro-Western sentiments among the striking workers. If the settlement strengthens the working class organizationally, it also strengthens the forces of reaction. Poland stands today on a razor's edge.

The compromise creates an impossible situation economically and politically; it cannot last. In a country facing international bankruptcy, heavily subsidized by the Soviet Union, the strikers are demanding the biggest free lunch the world has ever seen. The Poles demand that they live like West Germans. There's a joke in Poland: we pretend to work and the government pretends to pay us. In West Germany one works.

Politically the Stalinist bureaucracy cannot live with this kind of independent working-class organization, a form of cold dual power. The bureaucracy is not a ruling class, whose social power is derived from ownership of the means of production, but a caste based on the monopolization of governmental power.

But it's a good thing someone in the



Strikers in Gdansk (left); praying beneath pope's portrait at Lenin Shipyard (right). A massive demonstration of the power of the working class — but a mobilisation for working-class power?

Kremlin has a sense of humor. If Gierek in Warsaw is pushed to the wall, Brezhnev in Moscow stands behind him. The settlement was conditioned, on both sides, by the presence of forty Soviet divisions in East Germany. The Kremlin has already made disapproving noises about that settlement, and Soviet military intervention cannot be ruled out. The end of the strike is only the beginning of the crisis of Stalinist Poland.

The present crisis was triggered once again by increases in the price of meat. On July 1 the Gierek regime took a gamble and it lost. To continue the price freeze was economically intolerable, especially to Poland's Western bankers (the food subsidy absorbed fully 8 percent of total national income!). To raise the price of food without a wage increase was to invite an immediate, nationwide mass strike/protest like in December 1970 and June 1976. The regime figured it could minimize the financial cost and social disruption by granting wage rises only to those groups of workers who made some trouble. The government indicated its

willingness to negotiate with unofficial shop-floor spokesmen, not just representatives of the state-run trade unions. In this sense the Gierek regime encouraged small wage strikes as a lesser evil.

July saw a flurry of slowdowns and strikes — tractor builders near Warsaw, railwaymen in Lublin, steel workers near Krakow — which were quickly settled with significant wage rises. Predictably, the strikes had a cascade effect. Other workers went out demanding more. In early August there were stubborn strikes by Warsaw garbage men and transit workers; one of the leaders was arrested.

But when on 14 August 17,000 workers seized the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, the Stalinist regime was faced with a fundamentally different order of challenge. It was the Baltic shipbuilders who in 1970 toppled Gomulka and forced his successor Gierek to accept an independent workers committee for a time. One of the strikers' first demands was to build a monument to the workers killed when Gomulka called in tanks to restore order a

decade ago. The regime quickly agreed to this.

Within a week 150,000 had downed tools, 200 factories were shut and the Baltic ports — Gdynia, Sopot, Szczecin, Elblag as well as Gdansk — were paralyzed. And it seemed as if every time the Interfactory Strike Committee (MKS) met, it raised five more, and more political, demands — "free" trade unions, end all censorship, free all political prisoners (there were only six). What had begun as a series of quickly ended wage struggles had become a political general strike.

Workers democracy or clerical-nationalist reaction?

What is the political character of the strike and the consciousness of the workers? Certainly the workers are reacting against bureaucratic mismanagement, privilege and abuse. The Polish workers' grievances are real and they are just. The firing of an old militant, Anna Walentynowicz, a few months

Continued on page 2

The Korean war and
the "third camp" ...4

CPA conference:
Pessimism in the '80s ...6

Poland...

continued from page 1

before her retirement, which reportedly sparked the Lenin Shipyard takeover, should infuriate every honest worker. The existence of special shops exclusive to party members and cops, which the strikers demanded be abolished, is an abomination, a rejection of the most basic principles of socialism.

But if we know what the Baltic workers are against in an immediate sense, what are their positive allegiances and general political outlook? Early in the strike there were reports of singing the Internationale, which indicates some element of socialist consciousness. Some of the strike committee members had been shop-floor leaders in the official trade-union apparatus who were victimized for trying to defend the workers' interests. They undoubtedly were and possibly still are members of the ruling Polish United Workers Party (PUWP, the official name of the Communist party). These advanced workers surely desire a real workers Poland and world socialism.

While the imperialist media always plays up any support for anti-communist ideology in the Soviet bloc, there is no question that to a considerable degree the strikers identify with the powerful Catholic church opposition. It is not just the external signs — the daily singing of the national hymn, "Oh God, Who Has Defended Poland", the hundreds of strikers kneeling for mass, the ubiquitous pictures of Wojtyla-John Paul II (talk about "the cult of personality"). The strike committee's outside advisers consist of a group of Catholic intellectuals headed up by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, editor of a leading Catholic journal.

The strike leaders flaunted their Catholic and Polish nationalist ideology. Anna Walentynowicz, asked if she were a socialist, replied she was a patriot and a believer. MKS leader Lech Walesa in the

Gdansk shipyard started every day by "rush[ing] into the courtyard and at a trot began tossing pictures of the Virgin Mary, Queen of Poland, into the air" (*New York Times*, 31 August). And at the signing of the strike settlement, Walesa ostentatiously wore a crucifix and used a foot-long red and white (the Polish national colors) ballpoint pen, a souvenir of Pope Wojtyla's visit to Poland last year. (To top it off, Walesa's father, who has emigrated to the US, posed with Ronald Reagan as the Republican reactionary officially kicked off his presidential campaign.)

Even more ominous was the demand for "access by all religious groups [read Roman Catholic church] to the mass media", a prerogative for which the Polish episcopate has long campaigned. This is an anti-democratic demand which would legitimize the church in its present role as the recognized opposition to the Stalinist regime. Significantly, the strike committee did not even demand the right to such media access for itself or for the "free trade unions" it was fighting to set up. In effect the Baltic shipbuilders were asking for a state church in a deformed workers state.

But the church is not loyal to the workers state. Far from it! The Polish church (virulently anti-Semitic) has been a bastion of reaction even within the framework of world Catholicism. A typical Polish parish priest would regard American Catholics, from the hierarchy to the laity, as a bunch of freethinking "commies". Especially since the 1976 crisis the Polish church has become increasingly open and aggressive in its anti-Communism. Early last year the *Wall Street Journal* (2 January 1979) observed:

"Thus, the priesthood has become in effect an opposition party. The number of priests is at an all-time high of 19,500 and many openly defy the Communist Party by building churches without government approval."

This article also pointed out that a

particular prelate was responsible for the greater oppositional stance of the church:

"In recent years, the church has taken a sharper anti-government turn under Krakow's Cardinal Wojtyla, who captured the allegiance of university students by opening the city's churches to their anti-government discussion groups." Just a few months earlier this cardinal from Krakow had become the "infallible" head of the Roman Catholic church, the first non-Italian successor to the throne of St Peter in four centuries. Karol Wojtyla is a dangerous reactionary working hand in glove with US imperialism (especially his fellow countryman Zbigniew Brzezinski) to roll back "atheistic Communism", beginning in his homeland. As we wrote when this Polish anti-Communist was made pope: "... he now stands at the head of many millions of practicing Catholics in East Europe, a tremendous force for counter-revolution" ("The President's Pope?", *WV* no 217, 20 October 1978).

The power and the danger of the Polish Catholic church are clearly revealed in the present crisis. The day after the Lenin Shipyard seizure Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski led 150,000 "pilgrims" in a commemoration of the bourgeois-nationalist Pilsudski's victory over the Soviet Red Army in 1920, reminding them how Poles acted when "freedom of life was endangered" (*UPI*, 15 August). A week later Pope Wojtyla declared before 1,000 Poles in the Vatican that "we are united with our countrymen", a deliberately provocative act under the circumstances.

The Polish episcopate, fearing both Russian military intervention (the Warsaw Pact forces were maneuvering nearby in East Germany) and its own inability to control a workers' uprising, has taken a different, more cautious tack. It waited until the regime made public the seriousness of the Baltic general strike and then, while expressing sympathy for the workers' aims, warned against "prolonged stoppages". When the strike started spreading to other areas, the regime put Wyszynski on television to call for the workers to settle. Then a few days later the church hierarchy backed off from so fulsomely supporting the government.

But whatever the present tactical calculations of the Polish episcopate, in a power vacuum the church, well organized and with a mass base, will be a potent agency for social counterrevolution. One can appreciate the plight of Gierek & Co. Short of a political revolution it would take a JV Stalin to clean out the church, packing 18,000 priests off to forced labor camps. But then Poland would get a lot of new public libraries with spires on top of them.

"Free trade unions"?

Until a few days before the settlement the general strike was limited to the Baltic coast, a region whose modern history is very different from the rest of Poland. Before World War II the main Baltic cities — Danzig (Gdansk), Stettin (Szczecin) — were largely populated by Germans. With the consolidation of Stalinist Poland after the war, the Germans were driven out and the region resettled by Poles from the eastern territories annexed to the Soviet Ukraine. Thus, while the Baltic coast workers are highly volatile, they lack the socialist traditions common to the other main sections of the Polish proletariat — the heavy-industrial workers around Warsaw and Krakow, the Lodz textile workers, the Silesian miners. Had the general strike spread throughout Poland, its political axis could quite possibly have shifted to the left and away from clericalism.

Gierek tried, but failed, to work the same deal to end the crisis that he did in 1970-71. Then he gave the rebellious workers Gomulka's head; now he gave them that of his chief lieutenant, Edward Babiuch, and three other politburo members. In counter to their demand for a "free trade union", he offered them free elections to the official union. But in 1971 he promised the Baltic workers the same thing and took it back when the crisis atmosphere died away. The strike committee leader Lech Walesa no doubt had this experience in mind when he

said, "we were promised that many times before".

Now the workers' attitude is very different than, say, ten years ago. The 1970-71 strikes were clearly economic. None of the eleven demands of the Warski Shipyard strike committee in Szczecin (the leading workers' organization at the time) went beyond prices, wage compensation and no reprisals. Today leading elements of the Gdansk-based Interfactory Strike Committee are associated with the Catholic church opposition and the social-democratic Committee for Social Self-Defense (KOR). With the authority of the bureaucracy greatly weakened, the unions will strongly tend to break the paper prohibition on political oppositional activity.

The particular slogan of "free trade unions", pushed for years by the CIA-backed Radio Free Europe and the Catholic church, has acquired a definite anti-communist and pro-Western connotation. Remember the 1921 Kronstadt mutiny's call for "free soviets" — free from Communists, that is! An integral part of the Trotskyist program for proletarian political revolution in the degenerated/deformed workers states is the struggle for trade unions independent of bureaucratic control. Trade unions and the right to strike would be necessary even in a democratically governed workers state to guard against abuses and mistakes by administrators and managers. But it is far from clear that the "free trade unions" long envisioned by the dissidents would be free from the influence of the pro-Catholic, pro-NATO elements who represent a mortal danger to the working class. In any case, in the highly politicized situation in Poland today the "new, self-governing" trade unions cannot and will not limit themselves to questions of wage rates, working conditions, job security as was the case, for example, with the Szczecin workers committee in 1971. They will either be drawn into the powerful orbit of the Catholic church or have to oppose it in the name of socialist principle.

And in determining that outcome the presence of a revolutionary vanguard party would be critical. A central task for a Trotskyist organization in Poland would be to raise in these unions a series of demands that will *split* the clerical-nationalist forces from among the workers and separate them out. These unions must defend the socialized means of production and proletarian state power against Western imperialism. In Poland today the elementary democratic demand of the separation of church and state is a dividing line between the struggle for workers democracy and the deadly threat of capitalist restorationism.

The germs of a Leninist-Trotskyist opposition in Poland would have nothing to do with the present dissident groups. It would denounce them for trying to tie the strikers to imperialism, the pope and Pilsudskite anti-Soviet nationalism. But among the rebellious workers there must be elements that are fed up with the bureaucracy and looks back to the traditions of Polish communism, while having no truck with bogus "democracy" in priests' robes. It is among this layer above all that we must struggle to win the cadres to build a genuinely communist proletarian party that can defend and extend the collectivist economic gains,

continued on page 8

Letter

Melbourne,
27 August, 1980

Dear Comrades,

The recent article "SWP/HKE's Fallahi: All the way with the Imam" (*Australasian Spartacist* no 76, August 1980) correctly paints Fallahi and her Socialist Workers Party (SWP) mentors as the Khomeini-lovers they are. However, I feel it is necessary to clarify and expand upon two points discussed in the article concerning Fallahi's visit to LaTrobe University. First, the article says "the SWP was forced to concede something they have always bureaucratically tried to deny: substantial (if not fair) speaking rights for Spartacist supporters". The fact is, having been already politically discredited and challenged by leaflets and question

sheets distributed by the campus Spartacist Club, they had no choice but to grant us speaking time, for fear of losing control of their meeting. And then it was only after a fight from the floor.

Secondly, it states that "A group of campus leftists from the Socialist Left, International Socialists and feminist milieu — none of whom have any love for the SL's Trotskyist program, but a better sense of workers democracy than the SWP by tenfold — came to ensure that the SL *did* get into the meeting". In fact, these people have *no* sense of workers democracy. Yes, they came to defend our right to enter the meeting, but only because they knew that this was to be a showdown between the Spartacist League and the pro-mullah SWP over Iran. These "leftists" were forced to tail our communist program of "Down with the mullahs — For workers revolution in Iran!", because their own brand of impotent reformism meant that they could not present a revolutionary alternative to the SWP. From the Libertarian Socialist editors of the campus paper *Rabelais*, who regularly engage in open political censorship of our submitted articles; to the Socialist Left who have excluded us from a number of their "public" events out of fear of discussing any politics at all; right over to the Russia-hating International Socialists who also keep out Trotskyists from their "Friends of the IS" and "public" meetings — they all really share *opposition* to workers democracy in common with the reformist SWP.

For the Socialist Left which is currently in an "existential" crisis, let them remember that having at best a sub-reformist perspective, they found themselves tailing the Spartacist Club's revolutionary program on Iran. Now let them come to terms with that!

Communist greetings,
Jenny Stein

Australasian
SPARTACIST 

Revolutionary Marxist monthly of the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand, section of the international Spartacist tendency, for the rebirth of the Fourth International.

EDITORIAL BOARD:
James Shaughnessy (Managing Editor), Doug Fullarton, Steve Hooper (Melbourne correspondent), Chris Korwin, David Reynolds, Ron Sperling, Linda Brooke (production).

CIRCULATION: Paul Connor.

Printed by trade union labour. Registered at GPO, Sydney for posting as a publication — Category B. Subscriptions \$3 for 11 issues; airmail overseas \$10 for 11 issues. Address all correspondence to: Spartacist Publications, GPO Box 3473, Sydney, NSW, 2001. Telephone (02) 264-8115.

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

Printed by Eastern Suburbs, Randwick, NSW.

Change of telephone number

from 12 September

Sydney Spartacist League
— (02) 264-8195

Spartacist Publications
— (02) 264-8115

Spartacist League

MELBOURNE.....(03) 62-5135
GPO Box 2339,
Melbourne, Vic, 3001

SYDNEY.....(02) 264-8195
GPO Box 3473,
Sydney, NSW, 2001.

Australasian Spartacist

Polish social democrats arm-in-arm with clerical reaction

All the Pope's dissidents

"The strikes in Poland mark a significant turn in Eastern Europe because workers and dissident intellectuals have joined forces in a major conflict with the Government", noted a news analysis in the *New York Times* (23 August). As to the existence of the alliance there is no doubt. From the beginning of the Polish strike wave in early July and in the early stages of the shipyard occupations, dissident circles in Warsaw were the main source of information for the imperialist press. In addition, several of the key strike leaders have been publicly associated over the past several years with opposition defense groups, and they have drawn in prominent Catholic intellectuals as "expert advisers". So while the ruling bureaucracy has been reluctant to use force against workers in the Baltic ports, on August 20 police in the capital rounded up 14 well-known dissidents accused of illegal association.

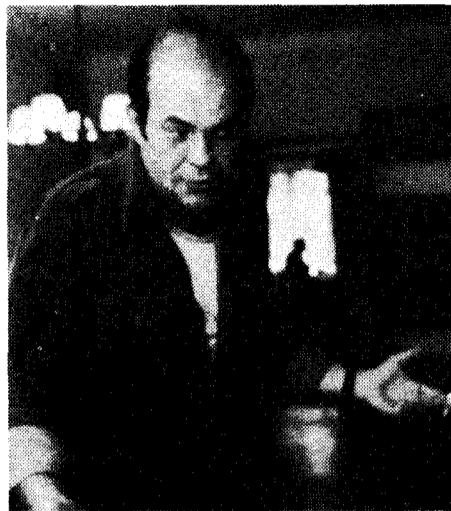
Who are the Polish dissidents? Western commentators hail the appearance of a "worker-intellectual alliance". Yet the non-Stalinist left-wing press sounds the same theme. Thus we find favorable interviews with dissident leader Jacek Kuron being printed everywhere from the liberal *Le Monde* and *Der Spiegel* to publications of the ostensibly Trotskyist United Secretariat (USec). Meanwhile, *New York Times* columnist Flora Lewis (a former official of the OSS, World War II predecessor of the CIA) praises Kuron

(and largely successful) effort to form an alliance with the Catholic hierarchy. For it is the church together with the land-holding peasantry which form the social basis for counterrevolution in Poland.

KSS-KOR: Social Democrats for Popery

The best-publicized Polish dissident group in the West is the Committee for Social Self-Defense (KSS), better known by its original name Workers Defense Committee (KOR). The leading spokesman for KSS-KOR is Jacek Kuron, and its newsletter *Robotnik* includes among its correspondents Lech Walesa, the leader of the Interfactory Strike Committee centered on the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk. The KOR was formed after the suppression of the June 1976 strikes at Radom and Ursus, and originally centered its activities on raising funds for and demanding release/reinstatement of the hundreds of workers arrested and fired at that time. After a general amnesty a year later it became the KSS and concentrated on building ties to key factories through *Robotnik*. Most of the pseudo-Trotskyist left in the West has come out in support of the KSS-KOR in varying degrees.

Because of its name and origins and the reputation of Kuron, KOR is sometimes referred to by superficial observers as "Marxist in orientation". Social-democratic is a far more accurate descrip-



Polish social-democratic "dissident" KOR leader Jacek Kuron.

Modzelewski) an "Open Letter to Communist Party Members" in 1964; for this he became a victim of bureaucratic repression, spending six years in jail. The United Secretariat opportunistically hailed the Kuron-Modzelewski text with its syndicalist program and fuzzy analysis (which called Poland a "bureaucratic state") as the "first revolutionary Marxist document" to come out of the post-war Soviet bloc. Since then, however, Kuron has moved far to the right, now posing the struggle in East Europe as one of "pluralism vs totalitarianism". In his "Thoughts on an Action Program" Kuron supports peasant struggles for private property, claims "the Catholic movement is fighting to defend freedom of conscience and human dignity", and concludes with a call for the "Finlandization" of Poland: "We must strive for a status similar to Finland's: a parliamentary democracy with a limited independence in the field of foreign policy where it directly touches the interests of the USSR."

Marxism it ain't. But this social-democratic program for a peaceful restoration of capitalism represents the left wing of the dissident movement. The right wing is openly clerical-nationalist. There was a split in KOR in 1977 leading to the formation of ROPCIO, the Movement for the Defense of Human Rights. The latter is based on the founding declaration of the UN and the Helsinki accords and offers itself as an instrument to "cooperate with all international organizations which defend human rights...." Where KOR publishes *Robotnik*, ROPCIO puts out *Gospodarz* (The Peasant) and appeals to the Catholic rural population. And this is not the Catholicism of Vatican II, either. The *Economist* (9 September

1978) refers to this outfit as "the stronghold of more conservative, national and — with some of its members — traditional anti-semitic tendencies". To get ROPCIO's number, one only has to note that the first signer of its platform is General Borutz-Spiechowicz, the highest commanding officer of pre-World War II Poland, and that it distributes Pilsudski calendars.

ROPCIO, in turn, gave rise to an even more reactionary group, the Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN) whose stated goal is to "end Soviet domination by liquidating the power of the Polish United Workers Party". Then there comes the Polish League for Independence (PPN), a clandestine group, and remnants of the pre-war ultra-rightist, anti-Semitic, fascist National Democratic Party. All of them, of course, cover themselves with rhetoric about "democracy". This gives rise to the Polish dissident joke: "Question: What's a Polish nationalist? Answer: Someone who wants to drive the Jews out of Poland even though they aren't there any more". More respectable than these would-be pogromists is the liberal Catholic ZNAK movement, which has several representatives in parliament. While ZNAK leaves clandestine bravado for the fringe groups, their aims are no less counterrevolutionary: they are merely waiting until an explosion when they will step in as the only mass-based opposition.

The dissidents' Pope

The core of the clerical opposition, of course, is the Catholic hierarchy, a disciplined army extending from the village priest right up to the Vatican. Stalin's famous remark, "How many divisions does the pope have?" indicates military realism. But in Catholic Poland, probably the most religious European country today (even the men go to mass!), the church is a powerful political force. Unlike Hungary's Cardinal Myndszenty, who was discredited by cooperation with the Horthy dictatorship, the Polish pope (who brags he once was a worker) could be an effective rallying point for counterrevolution. A revealing article by the former editor of the CIA's house organ, *Problems of Communism*, Abraham Brumberg, makes this crystal clear:

"The Catholic Church has been crucial in the growth of a political opposition in Poland. Had it not been for the support of the Church, even the new alliance between 'the intelligentsia, village, and workers' to which Kuron refers would

Continued on page 9



Polish crowds welcome Pope 1979. A movement for "socialist democracy"?

as "a responsible man, a moderate and a patriot". Is this the "new coalition" which sophisticated Western fomenters of counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc degenerated/deformed workers states have been looking for as their "captive nations" relics fade into oblivion? Or does it portend a movement for "socialist democracy", as some on the left would have us believe?

Certainly none of the prominent dissident groups and personalities has a good word to say about socialism, which is identified with the perversion of proletarian rule represented by the present Stalinist bureaucracy. The dissidents' role as a conduit to the capitalist media is nothing new — Sakharov has been at it for years in the Soviet Union. Nor are appeals to the imperialists via the UN, the Helsinki Agreements, etc. What is particularly ominous about the Polish dissidents, who range from social democrats to openly Pilsudskiite reactionary nationalists, is their active

tion, and even that does not do justice to some of the anti-Marxist elements around it. Of the original 24 founders of KOR, six are former members of the pre-war Polish Socialist Party (PSP), among them the prominent economist Edward Lipinski. (*Robotnik* was the name of the PSP paper as well.) The list also includes a former chairman of the Christian Democratic Party, a delegate of the World War II London exile government, various activists from the 1968 student movement (among them historian Adam Michnik), left Catholic writers (such as former party member Jerzy Andrzejewski, author of *Ashes and Diamonds*), several veterans of the 1944 Warsaw uprising and Rev Jan Zieja, "Polish Army Chaplain in the 1920 and 1939 campaigns" — ie, a died-in-the-wool Pilsudskiite priest who twice fought the Red Army.

Jacek Kuron was first known in the West for co-authoring (with Karol

Sydney Public Forums

Fight clerical reaction!
For proletarian political revolution!
Polish workers move

Speaker: James Shaughnessy,
SL Central Committee

Sydney University
17 September, 1pm
MacCallum Room
Holme Building

Sydney
19 September, 7.30pm
Trade Union Club
111 Foveaux Street
Surry Hills

The roots of the International Socialists

The Korean War and the "third camp"

Socialist Worker



Tony Cliff: Korea was his August 4th.

Five years ago, the Vietnamese Stalinists were at the peak of their popularity in petty-bourgeois circles and "detente" with the Soviet Union was still the imperialist order of the day. For Tony Cliff's International Socialists (now the Socialist Workers Party — SWP), "steering left" and hoping to intersect the thousands of youth who had come to radical politics through identification with the Stalinist-led struggle against US imperialism in Indochina, the merest suggestion that the Korean War figured in the group's origins elicited cries of "calumnies and falsifications". Nothing of the sort, explained Cliff's court historian, Ian Birchall:

"It is sometimes alleged that the creation of the Socialist Review group represented some sort of concession to Cold War pressure at the time of the Korean War. In fact, the Korean War was not the issue at the heart of the split. Rather it was the shamelessly opportunist support for Tito's Yugoslavia by the rest of the Trotskyist movement from 1948 onwards that highlighted the principled differences."

— *International Socialism* no 76, March 1975

Today, "detente" lies mangled beneath the imperialist anti-Soviet juggernaut, the Vietnamese Stalinists have fallen in the popularity ratings and the posture of being principled fighters against Pabloite liquidationism has been exchanged for something more closely resembling the truth. Bob Dylan once said: "You don't need a weatherman to tell which way the wind blows". With the winds of the Cold War blowing, Tony Cliff's "third camp" has once again, proudly, raised its true colours: social-democratic anti-communism. And those self-styled Trotskyists, notably the International Marxist Group (IMG), who hold sacred the myth of the "revolutionary" SWP, reflect only their own opportunist appetites and rightward motion. Today the SWP makes no bones about its hatred for all things Russian. And the self-same Birchall makes the appropriate (and rather more honest) revision of his tendency's history:

"It is thirty years this month since the outbreak of the Korean War.... Last but not quite least it precipitated a crisis in the depleted ranks of British Trotskyism which gave birth to the *Socialist Review* group, ancestor of the SWP."

— *Socialist Review*, 15 June-12 July 1980

To be more precise, what the Korean War precipitated was a capitulation by a sec-

tion of the British Trotskyists to bourgeois anti-communist hysteria, which impelled it to break from the Marxist movement.

Front line of the Cold War

The Korean War was the climax of US imperialism's post-war drive to "roll back" the Soviet sphere of influence. But the victory of Mao's People's Liberation Army in China in 1949 inflicted a massive blow on the "Truman Doctrine" of "containment". "Who lost China?" became the rallying call of anti-Communist revanchism; and there was no shortage of US strategists, prime among them the megalomaniacal commander of the American occupation forces in Korea, General Douglas MacArthur, who advocated the "liberation" of China and the USSR. Speaking at the inauguration of puppet dictator Syngman Rhee's "Re-

tion until the outbreak of the war. Then, on 25 June 1950, North Korean troops rolled across the 38th parallel in a wide front, allegedly in response to a South Korean incursion. The question of who fired the first shot, always secondary from a class standpoint, was in this case virtually meaningless. The 38th parallel had already been a "real front line" for several months, reported a US State Department official in April, with "very real battles, involving perhaps one or two thousand men". Now it became the front line not only in a full-scale civil war, but in the international Cold War.

It is clear that Stalin was at least caught unprepared by the North Korean assault. The Soviet Union was not even present when the question came up before the United Nations Security Council, boycotting it in protest at the treatment of Mao's China. The absence of the Soviet veto enabled the US to gain a "United



US army "liberates", My Lai-style, a Korean village, May 1952.

public of Korea" in Seoul in 1948, MacArthur vowed that the "barrier" between North and South "must and will be torn down".

But for Stalin's unflinching adherence to the treacherous "spirit of Yalta", that barrier might never have existed. Soviet forces entered Korea on 10 August 1945, a month before the Americans. But Stalin readily acquiesced to Truman's "General Order Number One", which ceded everything south of the 38th parallel to the Americans, dividing the former Japanese colony into two zones of occupation. In the face of increasing imperialist belligerence Stalin took the same tack as in Eastern Europe, eliminating the capitalists and landlords as a class and installing in power a regime headed by Kim Il Sung to rule a deformed workers state. Meanwhile in the South, the US forces buttressed the corrupt tyrant Rhee and the capitalist/landlord clique around him.

For several years South Korea teetered on the edge of a civil war. In 1947 there was a wave of riots, strikes and minor insurrections. When the American occupation government decided to impose separate United Nations elections in the South in 1948, it led to open guerrilla warfare in the Cholla provinces and Cheju island, which continued without interrup-

Nations" propaganda fig-leaf for its genocidal onslaught against the Korean workers and peasants. Khrushchev was to claim later: "I must stress that the war wasn't Stalin's idea, but Kim Il Sung's. Kim was the initiator".

For the US ruling class, however, Korea provided a welcome opportunity for gearing up the American war machine in line with its new post-war role as the chief imperialist gendarme of the world. Within two days, Truman "interdicted" the straits of Taiwan in defence of the defeated butcher Chiang Kai-shek, who had previously been abandoned by the US; offered aid to the French in Indochina; made preparations to fight in the Philippines; and began an intensive militarisation programme across the board.

Liberators vs occupiers

The North Koreans did not yet have their army up to full strength. Nonetheless they made swift advances, nearly driving the imperialist/South Korean troops into the sea in the first few months. Popular support for the Stalinist-led forces was widespread, a fact painfully obvious even to the American imperialists. General Dean described

how the civilian attitude in the South to the "invasion" forces "appeared to veer between enthusiasm and passive acceptance". Seoul changed hands four times, with tangibly different popular reactions to the opposing armies. A member of the ignominious US Military Government in Korea, Albert Crofts, recounted a decade later that:

"... millions of South Koreans welcomed the prospect of unification, even on Communist terms. They had suffered police brutality, intellectual repression and political purge. Few felt much incentive to fight for profiteers or to die for Syngman Rhee. Only 10 percent of the Seoul population abandoned the city; many troops deserted, and a number of public figures, including Kimm Kiu Sic, joined the North."

— *The Nation*, 25 June 1960

If not for the lack of Soviet air power the North Korean army might well have achieved an early victory saving millions of lives. As it was the imperialist forces took advantage of Stalin's criminal passivity to overwhelm Kim's army with superior troops and firepower. Following a surprise landing at Inchon — behind Communist lines — on 15 September, they surged past the 38th parallel within weeks and continued to thrust towards Korea's border with China, the Yalu River. They effectively destroyed not only the North Korean army, but Korea itself. Two buildings were left intact in the Northern capital of Pyongyang. The head of the US Bomber Command in the Far East, Rosie O'Donnell, was forced to lament:

"Everything is destroyed. There is nothing standing worthy of the name. Just before the Chinese came in we were grounded. There were no more targets in Korea."

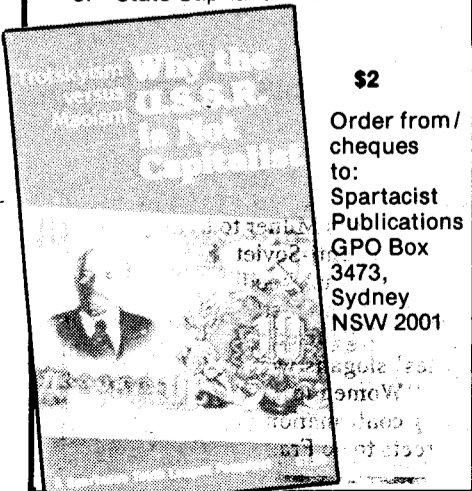
O'Donnell's solution to this dilemma was to repeatedly urge a nuclear attack on China. MacArthur, equally determined to "liberate" China, even at the risk of touching off another world war (this shortly got him sacked — and sent home to a hero's welcome), ignored Chinese warnings that they would not tolerate an advance on the Yalu.

The Chinese did come into the war and the American military advance was rapidly stopped. By the year's end the imperialists had been forced back to the 38th parallel through a series of Chinese human wave assaults, a heroic effort costing nearly a million casualties. In July 1953, the ceasefire was signed, after more than a year of military stalemate. The Korean peninsula had by then been reduced to rubble and scorched earth, and littered with at least two million corpses.

Since then, the US imperialists have maintained a massive military presence, without which the corrupt capitalist dictatorship would undoubtedly long since have fallen. For their part, the North Korean Stalinists gave immediate evidence of their treacherous willingness to "peacefully co-exist", trying a leading member of the Korean Workers Party in

Why the USSR is Not Capitalist

A Spartacus Youth League pamphlet containing a Trotskyist critique of the anti-Marxist theory of "State Capitalism".



\$2

Order from/cheques to:
Spartacist Publications
GPO Box 3473,
Sydney NSW 2001

1953 for "wanting to fight to the death rather than accept the armistice". "Socialism in half a country" a la Kim Il Sung has been particularly vulgar in its nepotism and cult of the personality. Only with Trotskyist-led political revolution in the North and socialist revolution in the South will all Korea have a truly revolutionary regime. But this does not diminish in the least the progressive character of the North Korean workers state. While the Southern masses remain immiserated in poverty despite the high economic growth rates, the lives of the people in the North have undergone a dramatic improvement under the collectivised economy.

No turning back

Yet for prosaic renegades like the SWP's Birchall this heroic struggle against the world's mightiest imperialist power has nothing but a "squalid test of strength". It was a test of strength — for the new imperialist hegemony of the American Century. And no sooner had the fighting broken out than Cliff and company deserted their revolutionary posts in order to seek an accommodation with the imperialist bourgeoisie and its social-democratic lieutenants. The Tribune "lefts" sanctified the imperialist rape as fighting "to uphold a Labour Party principle" and some toyed with the idea of using nuclear weapons.

A measure of the intensity of the anti-communist pressure and the disorientation in the Trotskyist movement was reflected in the initial response of the then-Trotskyist American Socialist Workers Party (US SWP), which failed for several weeks to state its unequivocal support for the Northern forces. From then on the Trotskyists took a clear, revolutionary stance:

"What each side represented in the revolutionary war in Korea was indicated by the social and economic programs they instituted in territories they had captured... This is the fundamental issue in the war as far as the Korean people are concerned. One side is taking the land from the landlords and giving it to the poor peasants. The other side is taking it from the peasants and returning it to the landlords." — *Militant*, 18 August 1952

But for Cliff, this was not a momentary disorientation; it was a decisive break, theoretically prepared two years earlier when, under the influence of the developing Cold War mood, he abandoned the Trotskyist analysis of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers state in favour of a "state-capitalist" analysis. Now the Cold War had become a shooting war, and Cliff's "third camp" analysis served the purpose it had for others before, as an exit visa from the camp of revolutionary Marxism.

When the question of Korea came up for a vote in the Birmingham Trades Council, one of Cliff's supporters in "The Club" (the Trotskyist entry grouping in the Labour Party), Percy Downey, publicly repudiated a defencist stand. As the Cliffites described it themselves in a statement "To the members of the club", Downey was expelled by the Trotskyist majority for "opposing both the Russian puppet Government of North Korea and the American puppet Government of

South Korea". Following Downey's public breach of discipline, the majority demanded an assurance — unsuccessfully — that the rest of the opposition would abide by discipline. Some were expelled, others left, and the *Socialist Review* was born.

The first issue, in November 1950, scarcely touched on the question of Yugoslavia, so decisive had it been in the split, but the very first sentence declared: "The war in Korea serves the Great Powers as a rehearsal for their intended struggle for the redivision of the globe". Elsewhere it attacked the Trotskyist *Socialist Outlook* for campaigning "... for full and unconditional support for the Stalinist forces in Korea, who (so it claims) are conducting a genuine struggle for the national and social liberation of the oppressed Korean people. This attitude of course, is fundamentally identical with that of the Stalinists and their fellow-travellers."

As even the fake-Trotskyist IMG was able to recognise in 1969, "One has only to



How US Trotskyists saw Korean war: cartoon in *The Militant*, 15 June 1953.

substitute the word Vietnam for Korea to see what a right wing policy that was" (*International*, November 1969).

The break was definitive, and there was to be no turning back. The deepening of the imperialist anti-Soviet vendetta only deepened the Cliff group's determined defeatism. A year after the split, a resolution of the National Committee (Minutes, 22-23 September 1951) affirmed that,

"... the world Trotskyist movement is divided into defencists and anti-defencists... We declare that we will not make any fusion with any group that stands for the defence of either Russian or American Imperialism."

Cliffite 'analysis': hate 'bloody Russia'

As the pressure of the Cold War anti-communist hysteria subsided and the political climate changed, so did the Cliffites' colours. The yellow of social democracy took on a pink tinge. Statements from 1959 that Luxemburg had been right as against Lenin were

rewritten to read the reverse. They began to move out of their home in the Labour Party and took up support for the Vietnamese NLF. But for all the tortuous theoretical attempts to discern a distinction between Korea and Vietnam, there was no qualitative difference. The only substantial difference was in the severity of the anti-communist pressures around them. It is telling in that context that, to our knowledge, throughout the 1950s *Socialist Review* featured not a single word of support for the NLF's direct predecessor, the Vietminh. Both were civil wars, genuine struggles for national and social liberation. There was the camp of the proletariat and there was the camp of the imperialists and their compradores; there was no "third" camp.

Thirty years after the fact, not even Birchall attempts to deny that on one side Korea too was a war of liberation:

"Originally the war had been — partially — a national liberation struggle. When North Korean forces came into the South

workers and students rose in their support."

To say less would be to fly in the face of overwhelming evidence, even from bourgeois accounts. As for the supposed equivalence of the "Russian puppet government" and the "American puppet government", Birchall concedes that:

"In the South the US gave short shrift to the revolutionary committees which had emerged out of the anti-Japanese resistance; where necessary Japanese forces were used against them.

"In the North the resistance was incorporated into a pro-Russian regime, which was consolidated by a land reform."

But with the entry of China into the war and the increasing importance of Russian military aid, the character of the war as a national liberation struggle became "non-existent", claim the Cliffites, subordinated to "Russian imperialism".

It is a strange breed of imperialist capitalism which encourages and incites revolutionary uprisings and general strikes, incorporates revolutionary committees into the regime it establishes

and strikes fear into the hearts of compradores and landlords. When Max Shachtman opted for the "third camp" in the wake of the Stalin-Hitler pact carving up Poland in 1939, Trotsky pointedly asked: "Why was it chiefly revolutionists, 'democrats', and Jews who fled from [Nazi-occupied western Poland], while in eastern Poland — it was chiefly the landlords and capitalists who fled?" ("From a Scratch to the Danger of Gangrene"). Explained Trotsky: "the social foundations of the USSR forced a social revolutionary program upon the Kremlin". Shachtman, Trotsky observed, "lacks the time to think it out".

In their headlong rush from Trotskyist defencism, the Cliffites too lacked the time or inclination to "think it out". The only significant theoretical reply to the Trotskyist analysis is a cheap syllogism which denies the possibility of creating workers states in the absence of revolutionary workers parties. This supposed anti-Pabloism is simply the inverse of the Pabloite thesis that where social overturns have taken place, they have necessarily been led by "unconscious" revolutionaries. The premise is the same — that there is no qualitative distinction between a deformed and a healthy workers state. The former denies the reality of a social overturn, the latter the necessity of a Trotskyist-led political revolution to remove the bureaucratic barrier to the development of socialism.

"State capitalism" is not intended as a serious Marxist analysis; it is a flimsy revisionist rationale for escaping the unpleasant task of defending a proletarian revolution. In a moment of rare candour, Tony Cliff said it: "And I say no, no, we have nothing to do with bloody Russia, because it is not a source of strength" (*Leveller*, September 1979).

And now that hating "bloody Russia" has again become a source of strength in social-democratic circles, the Cliffites have graduated from merely standing aside from a struggle against reaction to enthusiastically aiding the reactionaries, putting their energies to use encouraging Margaret Thatcher to starve out the Red Army soldiers fighting against obscurantist mullahs, feudal landlords and enslavers of women.

That is why defence of the Soviet Union has been a question of proletarian principle and a touchstone of revolutionary Marxism from the first days of the October Revolution. A decade ago, even the IMG was prepared to recognise as much:

"The logic of their position leads them to deny that we should be on the side of other workers states against imperialism. This is why the difference between Trotskyists and "state capitalists" is a principled one."

— *International*, December 1969

From the 'renegade Kautsky' in 1918 to the renegade Cliff today, one thing has not changed: those who abandon the proletarian duty of defending the Soviet Union end up in the imperialist camp. And that is why we chant, as we have had occasion to do frequently of late, "Afghanistan today, Korea '53 — Cliff's still a friend of the bourgeoisie".

— reprinted from *Spartacist Britain* no 24, August/September 1980



MELBOURNE — Thirty years after their break with Trotskyism during the Korean War, the Cliffites are flaunting as vigorously as ever their anti-Soviet credentials. In Britain, SWP leader Paul Foot has been running a campaign in the trashy *Daily Mirror* to embarrass the Thatcher government over its foot-dragging in the anti-Soviet crusade, with "exposes" on how "our beef" is rumoured to be finding its way to Red Army troops in Afghanistan.

In Australia, Cliff's followers in the International Socialists (IS) have eagerly followed their mentors' lead. On 1 August a handful of them, led by local honcho Tom O'Lincoln (third from left in photo), turned out to denounce the "Kremlin's propaganda offensive" ie the Moscow Olympics. The IS had initially lined up with Fraser in calling for a boycott of the Games as well as trade bans against the Soviet Union. This outrageously reactionary position shocked even the British SWP, and one of their leaders, Andrew Milner, dashed off a letter exclaiming, "This puts you squarely on the same side as Fraser, Carter and Thatcher... trying to whip up support for the Cold War" (*Battler*, 8 March)! Dead right — but who is Milner to talk?

Earlier in January, the IS had shown up at an anti-Soviet rally which featured reactionaries like the Captive Nations Council and Nazi hoodlum Ross "the Skull" May. This time, though, their rally was countered by a 25-strong mobilisation by the Melbourne Spartacist League, bigger and better organised than the third campists' dishevelled-looking band. Among our comrades' slogans were "The third camp is in Fraser's camp — Defend the Soviet Union!", "Women in veils, workers in jails, this is what the IS hails!" It was a small, but striking confirmation that the SL stands by the Trotskyist program while the IS takes to the streets to do Fraser's dirty work for him. ■

It was a veritable smorgasbord of workshops, films and exhibitions, designed to cater to every taste, which greeted participants at the Communist Party (CPA)-organised "Communists and the Labour Movement Conference" held over the 23-24 August weekend at Melbourne's State College. The official purpose was to "celebrate" the party's "sixty years of struggle". Old party stalwarts turned out to nostalgically reminisce about the days when the CPA's strikebreaking support for World War II brought it increased membership and a measure of public acceptance; current party leaders gave "critical reappraisals" (for the nth time) of the party's past; younger CPA leaders held forth on the party's "perspectives" for the future.

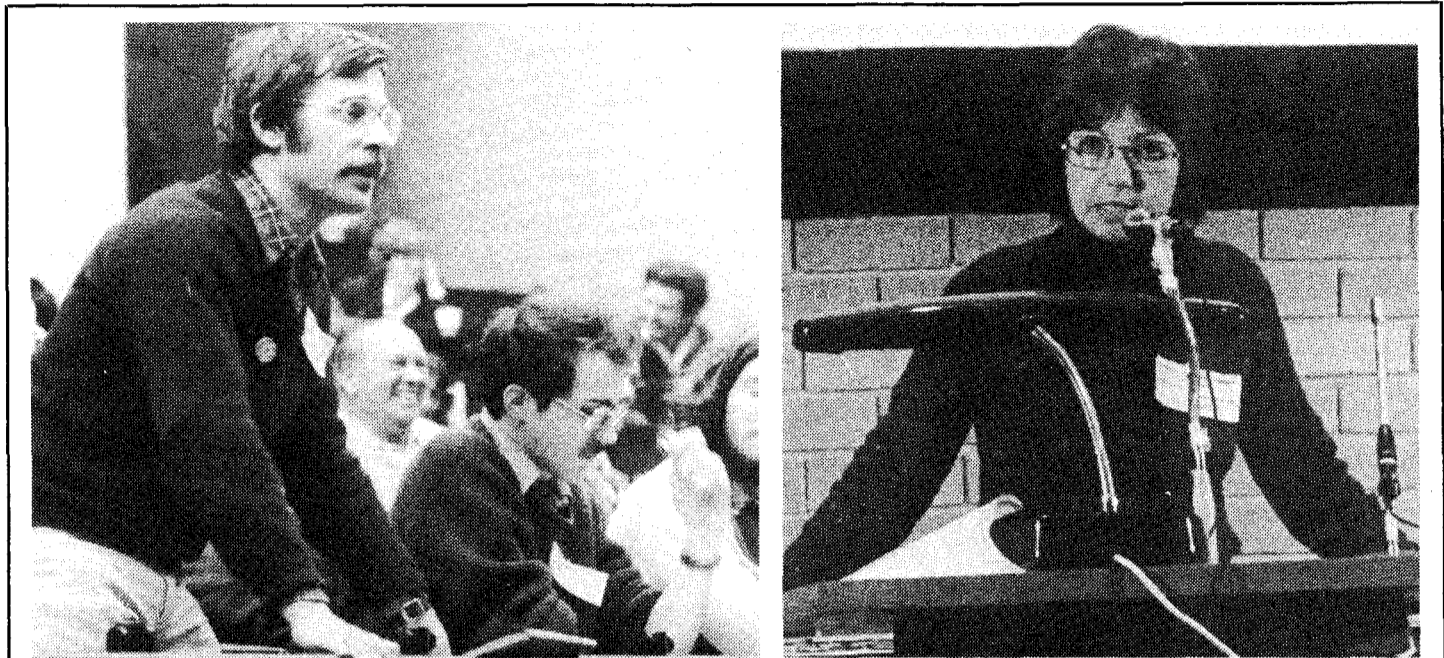
But none of the gala weekend euphoria could hide the reality. As the conference got underway, Spartacist League (SL) members and supporters had distributed a leaflet entitled "Nostalgia, Reformism, Betrayal: Swansong of the CPA". It accurately captured the real significance of the weekend:

"This conference is ... the swansong of the CPA's hopes for a new lease of life following its split from the Kremlin bureaucracy ten years ago. For a few years, tailing the (now vanished) New Left, the CPA made certain empty 'revolutionary' noises. But now it merely celebrates its most successful betrayals of the working class, while repudiating in horror the best part of its past — when it was a section of the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky."

So it proved.

Nostalgia, reformism, betrayal

CPA: Pessimism



Left: Steve Haran, founding member of CPA Left Tendency who joined Spartacist League. Right: CPA national president Judy "I was an alienated typist" Munday.

ASp photos

"Oh, what a lovely war it was"

In the past ten years the CPA has taken to admitting that much of what it did in its Stalinist days was "mistaken". Not so its role in World War II. For the CPA this was their "golden age", when party membership rose from 4000 in June 1940 to 16000 in December 1942 to 23000 in 1945. But it has a contemporary purpose as well — a pledge to the bourgeoisie

in Australia, Britain and America, the outcome of the war would have been very different, an outcome that left the Soviet Union destroyed and fascism dominant throughout the world. Think that Trotskyist policy through to the end". But in fact, Blake's objections — in essence a rehash of the old Stalinist slander that Trotskyism was "objectively" anti-Soviet and pro-Hitler — had

intended to do what the old, exposed slanders can no longer. Denis Freney, one-time mate of Michel Pablo — when the latter was busy helping the bourgeois-nationalist Ben Bella control the Algerian workers — and the CPA's resident "expert" on Trotskyism, set the tone with a clownish, sneering presentation. But Stalin took *his* rewriting of history more seriously. After running through a "history" of Australian Trotskyism's origins that was false in practically every detail, he smugly announced that the Trotskyists were "isolated" by their opposition to the war — and went on to outrageously lie that the White Australia Laborite "Lang forces took a similar sort of position"! Referring to Trotskyist expectations of revolutionary upsurges after the war, he declared that "of course it didn't happen" (so, presumably the Stalinist *sellouts* of those upsurges that did take place didn't occur either). The rest of his talk was more of the same — cynical, jokes, more lies, and no politics.

The other featured speaker was Alan Roberts, a long-time supporter of Pablo and currently not much more than another disillusioned ex-communist liberal. He, at least, had the decency to point out that the Trotskyists had had to contend with Stalinist hit-squads helping the Gestapo try to wipe them out. But he concluded with a vehement anti-Soviet assault on Trotskyists for hailing the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. It's

ironic, he said, that the Trotskyists who had been persecuted by Stalin are now "defending the Soviet bureaucracy in its expansionist phase", a "bureaucracy which knows no bounds".

At this point the CPA was forced to allow discussion after the by-now standard "questions only" bureaucratic chairing was successfully overruled by a motion from the floor. Freney's "buffoonery and massive lies", as one speaker put it, backfired. Another SL comrade spelled it out: "Freney's clown act has a political purpose — to suppress political discussion" because "he has no answer to Trotskyist politics. What is Freney defending? He stands for a party that still defends what it did in World War II — helping lead the workers to the slaughter in an inter-imperialist war". Freney's attempted amalgam of the Trotskyists with the Lang group was a slander; it was the CPA which produced "this racist, chauvinist rubbish" in support of the war, he added, holding up the leaflet we had distributed bearing the "Jappy ending" cartoon featured by the *Tribune* on 16 August 1945, just days after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (reproduced page 7).

Roberts and the CPA were on the side of CIA-backed reactionaries in Afghanistan and going along with an anti-Soviet war drive, he continued, but "Trotskyists stand for the military defence of the Soviet Union". And the authentic Trotskyists were clearly the Spartacist

ASp photo

Report from "Communists and the Labour Movement Conference"

that it will serve as loyally in the next war as it did in the last. The CPA may have junked its link with Moscow, but it sticks by the social patriotism of the past.

What that "golden age" really consisted of was revealed in the session on the "Anti-fascist struggle: 1935-44" given by Jack Blake and Ralph Gibson. Both speakers recalled with pride the way the CPA had liquidated the class struggle in favour of fighting the "patriotic war against fascist Germany and Japan". And both admitted that "we helped to keep the mines and steel going productively and effectively" (Gibson), that the CPA "worked to increase production and minimise strikes" (Blake).

To many old CPAers in the audience all this was perfectly palatable. But to the SL members present, it was a celebration of betrayal and the grossest class collaboration. As one comrade put it in his intervention, Blake had admitted that "in the Miners' Federation particularly, the conduct of the CP was virtually one of a strikebreaker, attempting to prevent strikes and when they occurred to stop them".

Stung by this charge, Blake replied that the CPA had *not* broken any strikes; the following day at the session on "Theories of Industrial Work" he repeated that "to my knowledge [there was] no case of strikebreaking" during World War II. But in fact the CPA *did* help break strikes, for example at the Austral Bronze plant in Sydney in 1943. Indeed, an internal circular by CPAer Pat Lavelle was circulated on *how* to break the strike, while Jack McPhillips helped implement the policy. Perhaps Blake "forgot" this incident?

Blake also felt obliged to take up the Trotskyist position on the war, saying that "if the basic Trotskyist position had seriously influenced the labour move-

ments in Australia, Britain and America, the outcome of the war would have been very different, an outcome that left the Soviet Union destroyed and fascism dominant throughout the world. Think that Trotskyist policy through to the end". But in fact, Blake's objections — in essence a rehash of the old Stalinist slander that Trotskyism was "objectively" anti-Soviet and pro-Hitler — had

been answered in advance by the first SL speaker. As he put it: "What is the best way of defending the Soviet Union anyway, except for state power to be in the hands of the workers in other states? Here and in France, in Britain and in the United States? That was the only *real* way to defend the Soviet Union against fascism; that is the only *real* way to prevent fascism ever occurring again: to destroy the bourgeoisies in their own countries."

Another comrade took up Blake's challenge directly:

"The speaker said before, 'Think Trotskyist policies to the end'. Well we saw Stalinist policies from beginning to end, and we can see what happened. ... It was the Stalinist policy of calling social democrats 'social fascists' and refusing to have a united front with them to smash fascism that allowed fascism to grow."

Their arguments rebutted at every turn, the CPA members present could only lamely claim that our comrades were "too young" to understand what "it was really like", and that if we "had been there", we wouldn't have such ideas. But as Blake admitted, there were those there at the time who *did* fight for this revolutionary program — the small group of Australian Trotskyists led by the then-revolutionary communist Nick Origlass. It was Origlass, described by Blake as "an extremely powerful and principled leader", who stood against the stream and said "This is not our war" (see *Australasian Spartacist* no 76, August 1980 for articles from the Trotskyist press of the time). At the time, though, the Stalinists slandered the Trotskyists as "agents of Hitler and the Mikado".

It was the Trotskyists too who fought the Stalinists' betrayals, despite vilification, thuggery and assassinations. The session on "Australian Trotskyism" was



Who's calling who a "revisionist"? Maoist Ted Hill (left) and CPA leader Bernie Taft (centre) listen as Laurie Aarons speaks on 1963 split.

in the '80s

League, as the various fake-Trotskyist groupings present — including the International Socialists and Frans Timmerman of Paul White's grouplet — intervened to *solidarise* with the anti-Soviet CPA line.

The USSR? "Don't ask me!"

But what the class nature of the Soviet Union now is, the CPA cannot say. Confronted by a Spartacist questioner at the session on Hungary 1956, CPA "theoretician" Eric Aarons could only bluster. The SL comrade had asked him pointblank, "What is your analysis of the Soviet Union today? What sort of class society do you think it is?", and had underlined the importance of the question by pointing out that "The Communist Party of Australia, like Communist Parties throughout the world, for years justified every betrayal and every crime against the working class, in the name of socialism and the Soviet Union". Aarons hedged and fudged in his reply:

"I cannot answer that question briefly. I wrote in the pre-Congress discussion in 1974 ... a long account of this where I tried to outline my views about what the political economy of the Soviet Union was and the nature of the regime."

In an effort to pin him down, another SL comrade interjected, "Which class is in power [in the USSR]?", but again Aarons could only say "I cannot answer that question simply".

Such deliberate evasion, after years of hailing the USSR as the "socialist fatherland", is a good illustration of the CPA's bankruptcy today. But as we pointed out in our leaflet to the conference, it doesn't really matter to them what the Soviet Union is, since "independence" is also a repudiation of any duty to defend the USSR if that comes into fundamental conflict with its first loyalty "to the Australian bourgeoisie. Fittingly, alongside Aarons on the platform was the virulently anti-communist renegade Stephen Murray-Smith, who had come along to defend "the way of life in a liberal democracy" and to castigate communists as people who would be "dobbing in your grandmothers and your old mates" if they ever took power.

Murray-Smith needn't lose any sleep about the CPA taking state power, though. As one SL comrade seeing the CPA up close for the first time noted, throughout the conference "the word 'revolutionary' either wasn't used or was used as a derogatory term". Victorian CPA leader John Sindy said as much himself during his presentation on the 1971 split. Needling Laurie Aarons for the "revolutionary" pretensions of the CPA in the early seventies, Sindy recalled: "In the main document of the 1974 Congress, the words 'revolution' or 'revolutionary' occurred, on my count, 54 times. On paper we were a very revolutionary party".

Both at the session on the 1971 split and on the 1963 break which gave birth to Ted Hill's Maoists, the CPA speakers — Laurie Aarons, Bernie Taft and Sindy — all took the opportunity to assert that, unlike the pro-Peking or pro-Kremlin parties, the CPA is a solidly "Australo-communist" (ie reformist) group, with no "foreign" ties. Taft aggressively defended the "peaceful, parliamentary" road during his attack on Hill, and at the session on "workers control" even urged that the left should stop "the automatic response of support to strikes; there are many selfish strikes".

The CPA's rightward move was

apparent to all — including to Ted Hill whose attendance at the 1963 debate was his first appearance on a CPA platform since the original split. Initially, he said, he thought the conference was just going to be "an exercise in geriatric nostalgia"; but instead he took the opportunity to "warmly welcome the well-known opposition by many present to the Soviet invasions of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan" and to invite the CPA into his anti-Soviet "united front". The CPA is sure to decline the offer — but not because they disagree with Hill on the need to get the Soviets out of Afghanistan. Rather, it's



This monstrously racist cartoon, captioned "JAPPY ENDING", appeared in Tribune, 16 August 1945, days after bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

because the Hillites are now an irrelevant sect; indeed, in CPA circles, Hill is probably still the most hated man in all Victoria, as one participant noted afterwards.

"I was a teenage leftist"

At the workshop on the long-defunct Left Tendency (LT) of the CPA, a "sadder but wiser" Terry O'Shaughnessy recalled how he and other erstwhile New Leftists had thought the CPA "had shifted decisively to the left in the period from about 1970", having "thrown off the worst features of Stalinism ... and broken from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union". He went on to describe with bland cynicism how the LT was first co-opted and then cruelly disillusioned. When the Aaronsites' feud with the Taft/Sindy faction in Victoria came to a head in 1974, "We personally were enlisted by the centre in this struggle", O'Shaughnessy fondly recalled. Harking back to the LT's workerist infatuation with shop committees such as the CPA-led "ECCUDO, the combined delegates organisation in the power industry in NSW", he said it was "much more obvious now" that this fetishisation "posed an organisational solution to a crucial political problem, the problem of reformism in the workers movement".

True — but what gall! Covering up for his own capitulation to the right when Aarons junked the LT, he declared absurdly that the "defeat of the Labor Government in November 1975 ... [made] many of our theses, many of our arguments, much less relevant". Even

many in the LT at the time squirmed as the CPA helped to prevent a general strike and to prop up the Labor Party tops. Finally he recounted how, after the Aaronsites decided it was time to be "conciliatory ... to the Victorian opposition", they smashed the LT's very right to exist in the party. "I suppose [that] sums up our naivete ... The key resolution was moved by Jock Syme, who was secretary of ECCUDO". O'Shaughnessy's conclusion? "We were very, very naive" — not to believe that the CPA could be transformed into a "revolutionary instrument", but for wanting a "revolutionary instrument" at all. O'Shaughnessy appealed to those like himself who had "grown up" to become a cynical, outright reformist.

This was exposed when Steve Haran, a founding member of the Sydney LT who was won over to the Trotskyist program of the Spartacist League, took the floor (after yet another battle for democratic discussion):

"I was expelled ... from the LT and the party, and the chief reason was that I said the CPA was reformist."

Fullarton, shortly before his bureaucratic expulsion. Both then joined the Spartacist League and are today fighting for a program which can defeat the reformism which O'Shaughnessy has now embraced.

Judy gets a job

The CPA, today is a party caught between Canberra and Moscow. Currently it sees its role as that of a left pressure group on the ALP. But behind its rightward drift there is a liquidationist thrust, which Eric Aarons spelled out during his talk on Stalinism: "some people think the CPA should dissolve and go into the ALP". In his "Theories of the ALP", Jack Blake echoed him: "Any orientation seeking to bypass or destroy [the ALP] is unreal". The ALP, he added, "is transformable into a Socialist Labor Party".

At the final session of the conference, on "Socialism in the 80s", the CPA's deep-rooted pessimism about its future was manifest. CPA President Judy Munday had set the tone by spending the central part of her 15 minute contribution on ... how she left the cloistered life of full-time work for the CPA to become a typist "in the real world"! Describing how "alienated" she felt by actually doing what millions of others do daily (ie working), Munday then described how after two days she asked her workmates "how do you get promoted around here?"! Even her own CPA comrades stared embarrassedly at the floor during this apolitical piece of trivia. But it certainly symbolised where the CPA is now: once it recruited people who wanted to fight capitalism — only to burn them out by its repeated betrayals of the working class; now it recruits in the image of the self-righteous liberal moralist Judy Munday.

Munday's pessimism was infectious. Mark (son-of-Bernie) Taft, joint national secretary of the CPA, added that "many of us despair of change"; Ian Mill, Socialist Left member of the Administrative Committee of the ALP in Victoria, flatly asserted "the seizure of power is not possible in the advanced countries". From the floor, Albert Langer, "Gang of Four" Maoist and decrier of "irrelevant sects" who was there representing himself, predicted further "disintegration" of the left this decade.

The chairman of the session then refused to call a single SL spokesman, despite the fact that it was quite apparent to the whole audience that we had our hands raised to speak from the very start of the discussion period. It was a simple act of bureaucratic cowardice: for our revolutionary program would have cut right across the CPA's gloom and despondency. This conscious act of suppression showed well that for all the CPA's prattle about democracy, it is as afraid now as it was in its Stalinist days of open political debate.

As a whole, the conference was best summed up by an incident during the final session. A youth from the audience asked union bureaucrat John Halfpenny whether he thought socialism in Australia would be achieved by legislative reform or would need soviets and armed workers insurrection. To that Halfpenny could only reply that there wasn't any real need to answer the question at all. And he was right.

Later, the same young comrade came to a Spartacist salesman and said that he'd been trying all weekend to get an answer to his question from the CPA — but couldn't. But having listened to our comrades intervene, he had begun looking on us as the authentic revolutionary pole at the conference. And indeed we were. For as we put it in the leaflet we distributed, the program we stood on and fought for was indeed the program of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, the early Comintern and the Fourth International of Trotsky. Our task, we said, was "the abolition of capitalism. Our aim — socialism. Our method — proletarian revolution". This alone is capable of leading to the Australian October. ■

LaTrobe Uni...

Continued from page 12

But for serious left students at LaTrobe the group's comic opera death agony is rich in lessons. For some six years, day in and day out, the Socialist Left attempted to maintain a "revolutionary" facade in direct political competition with the authentic Leninism of the Spartacist Club. It failed and that failure is clearly not just the result of personal hatreds and a resurgent right. The point is not just that the Spartacist Club is clearly the only dynamic left group on campus but more importantly it has been proven politically right time and time again. What is the record on AUS, Indochina, Iran, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe and Afghanistan? For this we have not needed political gurus and con-men committed to helping the administration to run the campus but simply granite hard commitment to the objective interests of the international working class and the revolutionary program of Trotskyism. Join the Spartacist Club! ■

Poland ...

Continued from page 2

opening the road to socialism by ousting the Stalinist caste which falsely rules in the workers name.

Poland presents the most combative working class in the Soviet bloc with a history of struggling for independent organizations going back to the mid-1950s. It is also the one country in East Europe with a mass, potentially counter-revolutionary mobilization around the Catholic church. Thus, unlike Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968, the alternatives in the present crisis are not limited to proletarian political revolution or Stalinist restabilization. At the same time, it is not Afghanistan where the Soviet Red Army is playing a progressive role in crushing an imperialist-backed clerical-reactionary uprising. In a sense Poland stands somewhere between Hungary 1956 and Afghanistan. How has this situation come about?

The bitter fruits of the 1956 "Polish October"

Key to understanding the exceptional instability of Stalinist Poland is the compromise which staved off a workers revolution in 1956. As in other East European countries the post-Stalin "thaw" produced a deep crisis within the Polish bureaucracy which extended to other sections of Polish society. Promises of "socialist legality" and higher living

standards led in 1953-1956 to a rising line of intellectual dissidence and working-class unrest.

In June 1956 workers from the ZIPSO locomotive works in Poznan marched into the center of the city calling for higher wages and lower prices. When the militia failed to disperse them, they attacked the city hall, radio station and prison. The army and special security police were called in. Over 50 demonstrators were killed, hundreds wounded. Poland stood on the verge of civil war.

In August Wladyslaw Gomulka, with a reputation as a victimized "national-liberal" Communist and honest workers leader, was reinstated in the PUWP; in October he was made head of it. A former general secretary of the Polish Communist Party, he was purged by Stalin in 1948 as a "Titoist" and placed under house arrest. Not sharing personal responsibility for the crimes of the Stalin years, Gomulka enjoyed considerable popular authority, especially among socialist workers.

In what would become the standard refrain of Polish Stalinism when under attack from below, Gomulka in an open letter "to the workers and youth" assured them that:

"... only by marching along the path of democratization and eradicating all the evil from the past period can we succeed in building the best model of socialism... A decisive part on that road must be played by widening the workers' democracy, by increasing the direct participation of workers in the management of enterprises, by increasing the part played by the working masses in governing all sectors of the country's life."

—reproduced in Paul E. Zinner, ed, *National Communism and Popular Revolt in Eastern Europe* (1956)

Khrushchev and his Kremlin colleagues still feared Gomulka as the Polish Tito and seriously considered military intervention to oust him. One of the main factors which forestalled them was that in large factories throughout the country workers councils organized resistance to any attempt by the Russian Stalinists and their local agents to overturn "the Polish October revolution". In the giant Zeran auto factory in Warsaw, the Communists armed the workers. But it was not the Russians who overturned "the Polish October" — it was Gomulka. While granting large wage increases for a few years, Gomulka gradually bureaucratically strangled the workers councils, which had helped bring him to power. He also suppressed the dissident Marxoid intellectuals. At the same time, his policies permanently strengthened the potential social bases of counterrevolution — the peasants and the priests.

The abandonment in 1956 of agricultural collectivization (never very

extensive) has had a profound effect on Poland economically, socially and politically. It has saddled the country with a backward, smallholding rural economy grossly inefficient even by East European standards. In the mid-1970s farm output per worker in Poland was less than two-fifths that of collectivized Czechoslovakia, for example! Many peasants still work divided-up strips, not even unitary farms. And the horse-drawn plough is a common



After Gomulka, Gierek (above).
After Gierek, what?

sight in the Polish countryside to this day. The rural population is increasingly aged as the peasants' sons and daughters emigrate in droves to the cities, where the standard of living is appreciably higher.

Contrary to the imperialist propaganda line that 90 percent of Poland is Catholic, the Polish workers movement since the 1890s has adhered to Marxian socialism. The strength of the Polish church is based on the social weight of the rural petty bourgeoisie. And today over a third of the labor force still toils in the fields, while 80 percent of farmland is privately owned. Only by eliminating their hideous poverty and rural isolation can the hold of religious obscurantism on the masses be broken.

An immediate, key task for a revolutionary workers government in Poland would be to promote the collectivization of agriculture. And this has nothing in common with Stalin's mass terror in the Russian countryside in 1929-31. Cheap credits and generous social services should be given those peasants who pool their land and labor, while higher taxes would be imposed on those who remained petty agricultural capitalists.

Polish Stalinism has strengthened the church not only by perpetuating a land-owning peasantry, but also in a more direct way. Since 1956 the Catholic ZNAK group in the *Sejm* (parliament) has been the only legally recognized opposition in any East European country. And that opposition has in general been anti-democratic. Church spokesmen have denounced the public schools' "atheization" of Poland's youth and have called for state financial support for religious instruction. The Polish medical system provides safe abortions for a nominal fee. (Women from West Europe travel to Poland to have their abortions in order to save money.) Committed to the patriarchal family and with it the age-old oppression of women, the church has singled out safe, cheap abortions as one of the great "crimes" of the Communist government.

By the late 1960s the Gomulka regime had pretty much exhausted the moral capital of the 1956 "Polish October". The economy was stagnant, real wages were rising more slowly than in any other East European country. The 1968 "Prague spring" in neighboring Czechoslovakia panicked the Polish bureaucracy, which feared the unrest would spread to its own more volatile and combative people.

At this point a faction in the bureaucracy around secret police chief Mieczyslaw Moczar sought to channel popular discontent into traditional anti-Semitic Polish chauvinism. Under the rubric of "anti-Zionism", the few tens of thousands of Jews who had survived Hitler's holocaust, many of them loyal

PUWP cadre, were driven out of the country. (Almost none settled in Israel, but rather ended up teaching Slavic languages in Copenhagen or Stockholm.) Even Gomulka's Jewish wife wasn't safe from accusations of "cosmopolitanism" and lack of "Polish patriotism". The present political atmosphere in Poland, especially the growing authority of the church, is conditioned by the purging of Jews, a traditionally socialist and internationalist cultural elite in East Europe.

Blood on the Baltic and Gierek's maneuver

In 1970 the Gomulka regime decided to raise the agricultural procurement price in order to stimulate greater production from the peasants. A few weeks before Christmas — an unbelievably stupid piece of timing — the government announced food prices would be increased on the average 30 percent. The Baltic ports ignited. Led by the shipbuilders, thousands of workers, some singing the Internationale, attacked police and tried to burn down Party headquarters in Gdansk and Szczecin. Over the objections of the top generals, Gomulka ordered the army in, tanks and all. More than a hundred workers were reportedly killed, many times that number wounded. Once again Poland was seconds away from a revolutionary explosion.

And once again the bureaucracy presented to the workers a new face and a new deal. Edward Gierek, an ex-coal miner and party boss of the mining region of Silesia, had a reputation as unpretentious, pragmatic and competent. It is commonly believed that as soon as Gierek replaced Gomulka, he rescinded the price increase and the strikes ended. In fact, he did not and the strikes continued. While offering considerable economic concessions, Gierek insisted that returning to the old 1966 price level was impossible. He spent the first two months in power running from one strike committee to another trying to sell them this economic program. But the workers were not buying it. In mid-February a strike of largely women textile workers in Lodz finally caused the new regime to give up; it agreed to freeze prices at the 1966 level.

In the course of his negotiations with the strike committees in early 1971, Gierek was forced to defend his role as head of a workers state and justify his policies as being in the specific interests of the working class. In turn, the strike committee delegates addressed Gierek not as the representative of a hostile, exploitative class but as a labor leader (possibly an untrustworthy bureaucrat) who was supposed to serve the workers' interests and do his best to meet their demands. The extraordinary *nine-hour* session in January 1971 between Gierek and the strike committee at the Warski shipyards in Szczecin is a dramatic empirical refutation of all "new class" theories of the Sino-Soviet states. Interestingly, the present director of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk was a member of the strike committee which bargained with Gierek in 1970.

Whereas in 1956 Gomulka had promised the workers democratization, in 1971 Gierek promised them prosperity. Judge me by the meat on your table, he told them. He promised huge wage increases for the workers, higher procurement

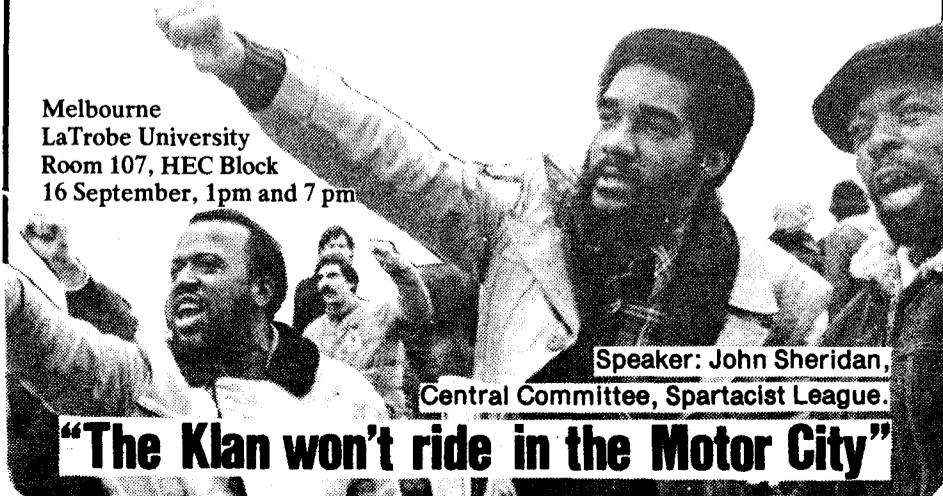
continued on page 10

FORUM/VIDEO SHOWING

"1200 rally to stop Nazis in San Francisco"

Two video documentaries demonstrating the Trotskyist program of mobilising labour, black and white, to smash fascist terror. The first film shows the rally held in Detroit on 10 November 1979 in response to the Ku Klux Klan massacre of five anti-fascists in Greensboro, North Carolina, and contains interviews with black car workers, and speeches from trade unionists and spokesmen from the Spartacist League which built heavily for the rally. The second film is of the demonstration organised by the April 19 Committee Against Nazis (ANCAN), which mobilised 1200 demonstrators in San Francisco to stop the Nazis celebrating Hitler's birthday. This Spartacist League-initiated rally reasserted that 'San Francisco is a labour town', and stopped the Nazi scum from showing their faces that day.

Melbourne
LaTrobe University
Room 107, HEC Block
16 September, 1pm and 7pm



Speaker: John Sheridan,
Central Committee, Spartacist League.

"The Klan won't ride in the Motor City"

Revolutionary Literature

Spartacist League Sydney public office

Thursday: 5.30 pm to 9.30 pm

Saturday: 12 noon to 5 pm

2nd floor,
112 Goulburn St
Sydney

Healyism, Laborism, Stalinophobia

What is the Gould group?

At the Communist Party (CPA) "Communists and the Labour Movement" conference in Melbourne, one group could be heard vociferously denouncing the "Stalinism" of the CPA and railing against the CPA's support for the leftist Steering Committee faction of the NSW ALP. It was the Socialist Leadership Group (SLG), headed by long-time "left" Sydney Labor Party fixture Bob Gould, out in force again after a rash of appearances at public left and labour movement events since it surfaced with a paper (*Keep Left*) last April. What is the SLG? What of its claim to be a class-struggle, even Trotskyist, alternative to the CPA and the wretched Labor "lefts" of Tom Uren's ilk?

Gould himself has a long record of rotten opportunist shenanigans — from the Pabloist United Secretariat to the 1971 NSW edition of the ALP Socialist Left — which have mostly ended in failure. He did succeed, however, in building a chain of bookshops and a small personal fortune.

In 1974-75, he began an association with the Socialist Labour League (SLL) of Jim Mulgrew, the Australian branch office of Gerry Healy's Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) in Britain. This odd alliance, with a group who had denounced him as a degenerate renegade only two years previously, was cemented by Gould's solidarity with a vicious SLL thug attack on Spartacist supporters in June 1975, outside the Sydney Trades Hall where Healy was speaking.

The formal program of the SLG scarcely goes beyond the ALP's watery "socialisation objective" and would indicate just another species of garden-variety Laborite reformism, but for a distinctive feature: its political congruence with the SLL, which since 1976 has become the mouthpiece for the capitalist dictatorship of Muammar el-Qaddafi of Libya and the Iraqi Ba'athist colonels. *Keep Left's* own genealogy (no 2, June 1980) traces the paper's name to a 1951 manifesto of the Bevanite wing of the British Labour Party, and to the name the Healyite youth group took for its paper during and after the fights which led to the split in the BLP Young Socialists in the early 1960s.

Like the SLL's *Workers News*, the SLG is markedly Stalinophobic and attacks the Soviet Union for "alienating" "Arab and colonial" peoples (like Qaddafi?) by defending the elementary reforms of the Kabul regime in Afghanistan against CIA-backed gangs (*Keep Left* no 1, April 1980). Yet the "Stalinist" CPA has the

same basic pro-imperialist line — both demand the Red Army get out and leave the country to the Islamic reactionaries! In fact what distinguishes Stalinism from the sort of class traitors who lead Gould's ALP is precisely political support for a bureaucratic caste ruling a deformed workers state; and that is just what the CPA aimed to junk when it cut its Kremlin ties in 1972.

The Gouldites absurdly deny the CPA's social-democratic split from Stalinism for a reason, as SLG supporter John Hoskin (who has been in and out of the SLL for years) let slip during the conference session on the CPA's one-time Left Tendency. Backing up an intervention by Mulgrew along the same lines, he insisted: "The CPA is ... the liberal wing of Australian Stalinism, there's no way that organisation can be won around to a revolutionary position". Note the underlying assumption: if the CPA isn't Stalinist, it might well be

for a public inquiry was an utterly hypocritical cover for his efforts to construct an anti-Steering Committee bloc with some of its right-wing factional opponents. At the Melbourne conference he also railed against the CPA's support for the Steering Committee, and its equally treacherous call for a "Crimes Commission".

The group's crass Laborism also emerged vividly at GMH Pagewood, where SLG supporter Paul Ford was a shop steward with a "rank-and-file" group. Not only did it peddle the reformist lie that "State resumption" by the Wran government would have saved jobs (see *Australasian Spartacist* no 75, August 1980); it made no bones about calling on the NSW premier to run it as a "profitable enterprise", as Ford said at a mid-July "Rank and File Conference" in Sydney. And racist protectionism was not just implicit in Ford's enthusing over Peter Wherrett's "Aussie car" schemes:

cupation — only weeks from the line shut down — was buried far down under the heading: "For the full ACTU redundancy plan" — ie no jobs, only more crumbs.

Workers News' heavy coverage of Pagewood was notable for its near complete silence on Ford, "Pagewood News" or the SLG; but an SLL speaker backed up Ford when he spoke on Pagewood at the Myers report meeting. Likewise SLG supporters abhor any mention of the SLL's sinister ties to capitalist regimes in Libya and Iraq, ties which have taken the Healyites out of the workers movement. Nevertheless there has not been a single instance to date of a clear political difference between the two groups, while *Keep Left* echoes stock SLL slogans like "Socialist Policies to Fight Fraser", joins the Healyites' praise for the "Iranian Revolution" of Khomeini's reactionary mullahs, and even made a point of pushing for Young Labor to take up Healyite-style "youth work" (*Keep Left* no 1).

The deeply politically corrupt Healyite political bandits went out of the workers movement altogether when they entered the service of the anti-communist fanatic Qaddafi and, increasingly of late, his ally, Iraq's Ba'athist strongman Saddam Hussein. They did not balk at applauding the Iraqi regime's slaughter of 21 members of the Iraqi Communist Party in 1978, proving that no crime against the oppressed will be too foul for the Healyites in holding up their end of this rotten allegiance.

And what about Gould? When confronted during the CPA conference, he evaded a direct answer but sneered to a Spartacist supporter that he wasn't going to protest "just because a bunch of Stalinists got killed" for trying to push the Ba'athist regime "to the right". This Stalinophobe thundered against state involvement in ALP affairs after the Baldwin bashing, but not when the Iraqi capitalist state intervenes and executes 21 members of that country's historic mass workers party. Why? The striking parallelism between the political positions of Mulgrew's SLL and Gould's SLG forces the question: Where does the "Socialist Leadership Group" stand vis-a-vis the SLL pimps for Qaddafi? The workers movement generally — and anyone tempted to take the SLG's more accessible Laborism and left talk for good coin — have a right to know the answers. We too await with interest the reply of the normally none-too-reticent Bob Gould. ■

Asp photo



Left, Bob Gould holding forth. Right, British pro-Qaddafi WRP leader, Gerry Healy. Partners in crime?



Workers Vanguard

possible to win it to a "revolutionary position". After all, the SLG itself stands for the reform of that big-time version of the social-democratic CPA, the ALP.

The cynical Gould's joking self-description to a Spartacist supporter in the corridors of the CPA conference as "a greasy social democrat" is apt up to a point. Thus it campaigned for such world-shaking demands as proportional representation in pre-selection ballots for the NSW upper house, and the defence of the traditional 60:40 trade union-to-branch delegate ratio in ALP conferences. "60:40 with PR. The unity of Labor is the hope of the world" sloganised *Keep Left* no 2.

Likewise, in the wake of the Baldwin bashing, Gould's formally correct "left" attack on the Steering Committee's call

Gould himself spoke ominously of "how jobs are exported to low-wage areas in Asia" at a 12 August union forum on the Myers technology report in Sydney.

In fact pushing this social-democratic rubbish was counterposed to, and actively helped to derail, a militant seizure of the plant as the opening blow of a real, national fight against car industry layoffs. At the CPA conference Gould bellowed about how an occupation had been necessary at Pagewood. Right — but it was the Spartacist League which issued this call at the start, not the SLG which confined itself to urging "consideration" of "the tactic of sit-in". After four roneoed issues of "Pagewood News", even the call for nationalisation had disappeared (no 6, 29 July), and a half-hearted call for some sort of oc-

Dissidents ...

Continued from page 3

probably have failed to survive the hatred of the authorities."

— *New York Review of Books*,
8 February 1979

Brumberg points out that the original KOR demands for amnestying workers arrested and fired in the June 1976 strikes were almost identical to those of the episcopate. "Since then, the parallels between statements by the Church — and especially by Cardinal Wyszynski, whom Michnik strongly, if not uncritically, admires — and those of the opposition have become even more conspicuous". He points out that supporters of the ZNAK group have participated in the "flying university" circles sponsored by KOR, which in Krakowa used churches for its classes with the permission of then-Archbishop Wojtyla. Michnik described the new pope as one of the two "co-founders of the anti-totalitarian policy of the Polish Episcopate" (*Der Spiegel*, 23 October 1978). Michnik, a Jew, is so enamored of the new, "enlightened" Catholic primate that he wrote of the pope's

visit last year:

"It will be a powerful demonstration of the bond between the Polish people and the world of Christian culture, a demonstration of their solidarity with the Catholic Church, and a demonstration of their yearning for freedom, the champion of which they see as being their fellow countryman John Paul II, the defender of human rights."

For Polish Trotskyism!

This paean to the standardbearer of capitalist restoration in Poland was printed without comment in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* (July-August 1979), a joint publication of supporters of the USec and the "state-capitalist" British SWP of Tony Cliff. But these pseudo-Trotskyists are not satisfied with such a tepid brew. A subsequent issue of *Labour Focus* reprints an interview (by the French USec paper *Rouge*) with Leszek Moczulski, who was a member of the Moczar faction of the PUWP at the time it ran the 1968 anti-Semitic purge, and now heads the KPN. The journal comments that Moczulski is more militantly anti-government than KOR, and hails the formation of his clerical-reactionary party as "an event almost without precedent in the history of

Eastern Europe since the late 1940s"! Meanwhile, USec leader Ernest Mandel laments that the Stalinist bureaucracy in Poland has not "permitted a democratic and intense political life, including a legal Catholic party..." ([SWP] *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, October 1979).

This pandering to clerical reaction is a far cry from the revolutionary social democracy of a Rosa Luxemburg, who wrote in 1905:

"The clergy, no less than the capitalist class, lives on the backs of the people, profits from the degradation, the ignorance and the oppression of the people. The clergy and the parasitic capitalists hate the organized working class, conscious of its rights, which fights for the conquest of its liberties."

— "Socialism and the Churches"

In fact, in all the publications of the Polish dissidents which we have consulted, some hundreds of pages, there is not one reference to Luxemburg, Poland's greatest contribution to the Marxist movement. "Naturally", because she was a Jew and hardly a Polish nationalist. But neither is there a reference to other authentic Polish Communists, such as Julian Marchlewski, Leo Jogiches and Felix

Dzerzhinsky. One of the greatest crimes of the Polish Stalinist bureaucracy is that it has discredited the name of communism among thinking workers.

The present crop of Polish dissidents are overwhelmingly enemies of the cause of proletarian socialism. They act as direct conduits to the church and the West. Today we do not see "dissident" Stalinists of the Titoist mould. On the contrary, the most left-wing are the East European equivalent of the "Eurocommunists". But where in the capitalist West this is but another variety of reformism, more closely tied to its "own" bourgeoisie, in the Soviet bloc countries passing from Stalinist to Eurocommunist means joining the camp of counter-revolution. Authentic Trotskyism stands not for the bogus "unity of all anti-Stalinist forces" — including disciples of Wojtyla and Brzezinski — but for a class-conscious communist opposition to the parasitic bureaucracy. And those would-be leftists who today follow the Kurons and Michniks should realize that if they are successful in bringing off a national revolt together with the clerical reactionaries, Gierek & Co will be the first to go, but they will be next.

Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard*
no 263, 5 September 1980

Poland

Continued from page 8

prices and state pensions for the peasants plus the rapid modernization of Polish industry. And how was this economic miracle (the term was actually used in official propaganda) to be achieved? Through massive loans from the West and also the Soviet Union. The Polish Stalinist bureaucracy rode out the crisis of 1970-71, but only by mortgaging the country to West German bankers.

For the militant Baltic shipbuilders the new regime's promise of an economic miracle was not enough. Gierek had to concede an independent workers committee arising out of the strike committee, and free elections to the official trade union. In a year or so the bureaucracy regained control in part through firing some committee leaders and coopting others, but mainly because the exceptional increases in real wages (running about 8 percent a year) quieted worker discontent and activism. A leader of the Szczecin workers committee, Edmund Baluka, now in exile, described the process in a 1977 interview:

"But, of course, Gierek did an about turn, and partly by bettering the material situation of the workers — and in the process massively indebting Poland to the West and the Soviet Union — the Party managed to rebuild its ranks and regain control.

"The rises in living standards gave the workers a false sense of security, but in the first 2 or 3 years of Gierek's rule people thought that things in Poland were really changing for the better."

— *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, May-June 1977

Gierek runs out of economic miracles

Gierek's economists projected transforming Poland into something like an East European Japan. They maintained that the rapid modernization of the country's industrial plant would enable Poland to flood world markets with cheap, quality goods and so repay the loans when they fell due. Whatever slim chance this economic maneuver had of working was dashed by the 1974-75 world depression. At a deeper level, Gierek's economic gamble failed because the Stalinist regime is incapable of mobilizing the enthusiasm and sense of sacrifice of the Polish working people. This incompetence is endemic in a bureaucracy, more due to lack of an effective corrective feedback than to material privilege.

Between 1970 and 1975 the value of Poland's imports from the West increased an incredible 40 percent a year (*East European Economics*, Fall 1979)! Exports could not possibly keep pace. By 1976 imports were twice exports, total foreign debt three times exports and debt service absorbed 25 percent of hard currency earnings (US Congress, Joint Economic Committee, *East European Economics Post-Helsinki* [1977]). Moreover, things were bound to get worse as

Poland's large loans came due in the late 1970s.

Gierek's Poland was heading toward the honor of being the first Communist country to declare international bankruptcy. In late 1975 the regime simultaneously tried to brake the economy and steer it into a U-turn. Wage increases were to be scaled back, new major investment projects practically frozen. The massive balance-of-payments deficit was to be reversed. The decision to raise food prices an average 60 percent in June 1976 was in part designed to spur agricultural production, but mainly to soak up domestic purchasing power, allowing more to be exported. Superficially June



Lenin shipyard strike committee meets. Where will the "free" trade unions stand — for clerical reaction or defence of socialised property?

1976 appeared to be a replay of 1970-71. The regime announced food price increases, the workers reacted with mass strikes and protests, the regime rescinded the increases. Yet the differences are perhaps more important than the similarities.

Six years earlier the regime had stood up to a two-month strike before relenting. Now Gierek cancelled the price increase within 24 hours, at the first sign of worker resistance. In December 1970 Gomulka had ordered a massacre. In 1976 Gierek forbade the use of firearms, and serious violence was limited to the mammoth Ursus tractor factory near Warsaw and the small industrial city of Radom. The Radom workers were driven into a fury when, on seizing the Party headquarters, they discovered a cache of top-quality ham and other luxury goods unavailable on the domestic market. By late 1977 all the workers imprisoned for participating in the June events were amnestied and most of those fired were reinstated.

The church played a clever double game. It supported the price increase, which benefited its peasant base and

gave it a bargaining counter with the regime. At the same time Cardinal Wyszynski called for amnesty for the imprisoned workers, a universally popular demand.

The June events were a devastating and lasting blow to the moral authority of the regime. Gierek's earlier promises of unparalleled prosperity were thrown back in his face. The popular attitude was caught in the line: "the party decided to stuff the people's mouth with sausage so they would not talk back, and now there is no sausage". The government inspired neither fear nor respect. Corruption, black-marketeering and worker apathy became common, even normal. In a 1977

waiting lines. If Polish workers still strike for higher pay, it's because they have no control over economic policy and would suffer inflation and shortages in any case.

The social democrats of the Committee for Social Self-Defense (KOR) are opposing the present large wage hikes on the grounds that it will simply fuel the inflationary spiral. Kuron, Michnik & Co, very full of themselves, are in effect offering the Stalinist regime the following deal (which, of course, they can't deliver on): you give us "free trade unions", an end to censorship, etc; in return, we will convince the workers to accept a few years of austerity. In an article in a current *Der Spiegel* (18 August) Michnik appeals to Gierek's noted pragmatism: "... whether he [Gierek] understands that a dialogue with the people is indispensable to carry through necessary, but unpopular, economic reforms cannot today be answered".

But the Polish workers must not pay for the gross mismanagement of Gierek's regime. Nor should they have the slightest confidence in the bureaucracy's "economic reforms". Egalitarian and rational socialist planning, capable of overcoming the mess the Stalinists have made of the Polish economy, is possible only under a government based on democratically elected workers councils (soviets). As a revolutionary, transitional step toward that Polish workers must struggle against the bureaucracy for control over production, prices, distribution and foreign trade.

The Polish Stalinist bureaucracy's economic mismanagement is today glaring. Nonetheless, the *historical superiority* of collectivized property and centralized economic planning, even when saddled with a parasitic bureaucracy, remains indisputable. Any Polish worker who takes Radio Free Europe as good coin and thinks he would be better off under "free enterprise" capitalism should consider these few statistics: between 1950 and 1976 the advanced capitalist economies grew at an average annual rate of 4.4 percent, the backward capitalist economies at 5 percent and the centrally planned East European economies at 7.7 percent (*Scientific American*, September 1980).

The Poles have contradictory economic aspiration. There is an overwhelming demand to abolish the special shops — an egalitarian socialist measure. Yet all those who get dollars from relatives in America would like to spend it on luxury goods imported from the West. For strike leaders who yearn for capitalism, we suggest a long vacation in Liverpool where they won't have to stand in line to buy anything. Of course, they will have a little difficulty finding a job, and even if they do their pay will be so low that they will have to cut back on their meat consumption. (The dissidents ought to be sent to Afghanistan where they can find out what Carter's "human rights" are all about by seeing what happens to them if they try to teach young girls to read and write!)

Break the imperialist economic stranglehold!

In 1978 over 50 percent of Poland's hard currency earnings were absorbed by debt service, in 1979 over 60 percent and today over 90 percent! Early last year Poland avoided becoming the world's biggest bankruptcy only by a major re-scheduling of its debts. But Poland's Western bankers are, in an opposite way, just as fed up with Gierek's economic mismanagement as Poland's workers. They demanded and got the right to monitor all aspects of economic policy and to have their recommendations taken very seriously — an unprecedented step for a deformed workers state. As an economist for Bankers Trust commented at the time. "This marks the first time a Communist government has embraced austerity — a purposeful cut in its planned rate of growth — for balance-of-payments reasons" (*New York Times*, 26 January 1979). This is the same kind of program the International Monetary Fund normally imposes on neo-colonial bankrupts like Turkey, Zaire and Peru.

But then Gierek's Poland has become a West German client-state economically,

open letter to Gierek, a former head of state and PUWP general secretary Edward Ochab wrote:

"The conviction is spreading amongst the people that one achieves nothing through honesty: the tendency to corruption, cliquism and the dishonest earning of money increases constantly."

— *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, March-April 1978

The government promised to leave the people alone; in return, it asked only that the people leave it alone. But the world economy wouldn't leave Poland alone.

For workers control of production!

Although the government promised to freeze food prices, it couldn't meet market demand at those prices, especially since money wages continued to rise. Raising the procurement price for the peasantry didn't encourage nearly enough additional output. And the government food subsidy — the difference between the price paid to the peasant and paid by the urban consumer — has been an enormous and increasing drain on the entire economy. In the past ten years the cost of food subsidies has multiplied *twenty times* (*Economist*, 12 January 1980)!

The regime tried to get around the problem through an elaborate system of different classes of retail stores. The better class the shop, the higher the prices, the more likely the goods would actually be on the shelves. At the top of the line were the Pewex shops which sold luxury items for Western currency only.

Politically prevented from raising prices in line with market demand, the regime resorted to rationing by waiting line. And the waiting lines kept getting longer, especially after last year's bad harvest (in part caused by peasant strikes). Things have now reached such a pass it's reported even the Pewex shops have empty shelves. A typical Polish family spends a good part of its free time hunting for food and other consumer goods.

The present large wage increases now being granted will lead either to wild inflation or even longer waiting lines. And Polish workers know this. One of the Baltic strike committee's demands is the temporary rationing of meat to replace the present system of multiple prices and the maddening resort to ever-longer

Spartacist Class Series

Building the Trotskyist Vanguard Party

Melbourne

Saturday, 13 September — The struggle against women's oppression

Friday, 26 September — The social democracy and the "family of the left"

Friday, 10 October — The main enemy is at home

All classes will be held at Plumbers Union Hall, 52 Victoria Street, Carlton. The 13 September class begins at 2pm. The 26 September and 10 October classes will begin at 7.30pm.

Sydney

Saturday, 13 September — For a Trotskyist leadership in the trade unions

Saturday, 20 September — The class, the Party and the leadership

All classes to be held at 2pm at 2nd floor, 112 Goulburn Street, Sydney. For further information: phone (03)62-5135 Melbourne, (02)264-8195 Sydney

supplying it with substantial quantities of raw materials. This was noted by the *New York Times* (20 August) during the present crisis:

West German banks, which have played an important role in providing Poland with credits, have pointed out that its deposits of coal, copper, silver, platinum and vanadium make it an intrinsically more promising client than either Hungary or Czechoslovakia."

One West German banker is now proposing that any new loans to Poland be secured by specific mines and factories.

Following the 1956 Polish crisis and Hungarian revolution Shane Mage, a founding leader of the Spartacist tendency (who has since abandoned Marxism), produced a theoretical consideration of the ways in which capitalism might be restored in East Europe. Should a petty-bourgeois clericalist party come to power in a "democratic revolution", he posited, it could restore capitalism by eliminating the state monopoly of foreign trade and reintegrating the country into the world economy without significant denationalization of the existing industrial plant:

"Another decisive aspect of the return to capitalism under petty-bourgeois democratic leadership would be the ties of Poland and Hungary with the capitalist world market....

"And what would become of the nationalized industries? Their fate would serve the interests of the peasants and petty-bourgeoisie and the needs for trade with the Western capitalists. Hungary and Poland can be capitalist without denationalizing a single large industrial plant; all that is necessary is to convert the industry... into an appendage of the peasant economy and the world market."

— Shane Mage, *The Hungarian Revolution* (1959)

To a considerable degree Poland has become an appendage of the world capitalist economy not, as Mage projected, under a petty-bourgeois "democratic" party, but under a shaky Stalinist bureaucracy which tried to buy off a combative working class and a backward, smallholding peasantry by mortgaging the country's wealth to the imperialists.

Thus, the response of the world, especially West German, bourgeoisie to the Polish crisis is divided between short-term financial interests and a historic appetite to overturn proletarian state power in the Soviet bloc. Most German bankers want Gierk to win the best terms he can get. After all, they've been pushing him for years to do away with the food subsidy and impose other austerity measures. But the right-winger Franz-Josef Strauss called for a moratorium on loans to Poland to blackmail the regime into granting all the strike committee's demands.

One cannot, however, consider Poland's relations with Western capitalism without taking the Soviet Union very much into account. To do so is truly to play *Hamlet* without the Danish prince. The experiences of 1970 and 1976

convinced the Kremlin that if the Polish masses were pushed too hard to pay the foreign debts, there would be a popular explosion which, whatever way it went, could only hurt them. So the Russians are paying a good part of Poland's debt both directly and by shipping the Warsaw regime agricultural produce. In one sense Poland has become the intermediary through which Western finance capital sucks surplus out of the Soviet workers and peasants (whose living standards are substantially lower than those of the Poles). If Polish workers don't appreciate this, Western bankers are very much aware of the fact. That house organ of the international financial community, the *London Economist* (9 August), writes of the current crisis:

"In past Polish crises the Soviet Union has stepped in with cash and emergency grain sales. But the Poles may be wearing out their welcome on begging-bowl trips to Moscow. The Soviet Union has already lent Poland \$1 billion this spring to meet pressing debt-service requirements."

One international banker, who chose to remain anonymous, remarked that Soviet military intervention would enhance



Priest giving communion to workers in Lenin shipyard.

Poland's creditworthiness (*New York Times*, 31 August)

A key task facing the Polish proletariat is to break the imperialist economic stranglehold. The Baltic strike committee is demanding "a full supply of food products for the domestic market, with exports limited to surpluses". (It is not, however, demanding limitations on imports.) Economic autarky is not what Poland needs. On the contrary, socialist economic planning should maximally utilize the international division of labor, exporting and importing as much as possible.

What a revolutionary workers government in Poland would do is cancel the

foreign debt. Well, not quite. The workers might export comrade Edward Gierk to West Germany, where he can work off his obligations in some Ruhr coal mine. A very good idea, some Polish worker might say; but will the bankers of Frankfurt write off \$20 billion with a shrug? What of imperialist retaliation, economic or military? Polish workers can counter such retaliation only by mobilizing the West European, centrally West German, working classes under the banner of a Socialist United States of Europe.

For the revolutionary unity of the Polish and Russian workers!

All organized forces in Polish political life — the Stalinist bureaucracy, the church, and all wings of the dissident movement — inculcate hostility to Russia as the enemy of the Polish people. The Gomulka and Gierk regimes continually threatened that any mass struggle, even purely economic strikes, would bring in the Soviet Red Army. "Our fraternal allies are concerned" is the stock phrase.

Union, having lost 20 million in fighting Nazi Germany, the Soviet people understand that NATO's nuclear arsenal is targeted at them. This understanding is now heightened by Washington's open threats of a nuclear first strike. The Soviet masses also know that the imperialist powers' war against their country, hot and cold, began with the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917. Russian working people see pro-Western "dissidents" like Sakharov for what they are — traitors to the socialist revolution.

If the Kremlin believes that the Soviet conscript army can be depended on to suppress any mass upheaval in Poland or Czechoslovakia, it is not simply out of mechanical discipline or Great Russian chauvinism. The Soviet people fear the transformation of East Europe into hostile, imperialist-allied states extending NATO to their own border. The Kremlin bureaucrats exploit this legitimate fear to crush popular unrest and democratic aspirations in East Europe, as in Czechoslovakia in 1968. There were numerous reports that Soviet soldiers were shaken when on occupying Prague they encountered not a bloody fascistic counterrevolution as they had been told, but protests by Communist workers and left-wing students.

Revolutionary Polish workers cannot hope to appeal to Soviet soldiers unless they assure them that they will defend that part of the world against imperialist attack. A Polish workers government must be a military bastion against NATO. And a proletarian political revolution in Poland must extend itself to the Soviet Union or, one way or another, it will be crushed.

- For trade unions independent of bureaucratic control and based on a program of defending socialized property!
 - For the strict separation of church and state! Fight clerical-nationalist reaction! Guard against capitalist restorationism!
 - Promote the collectivization of agriculture!
 - For workers control of production, prices, distribution and foreign trade!
 - For proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy — For a government based on democratically elected workers councils (soviets)!
 - Break the imperialist economic stranglehold — cancel the foreign debt! Toward international socialist economic planning!
 - For military defense of the USSR against imperialism! For the revolutionary unity of the Polish and Soviet working classes!
 - For a Polish Trotskyist party, section of a reborn Fourth International!
- reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 263, 5 September 1980

Victory to the Melbourne garbos' strike!

MELBOURNE, 6 September — As we go to press the week-old strike of 900 metropolitan garbage collectors is poised to become a major class confrontation. There have been three days of violent clashes at the Springvale-Waverley tip as Hamer's cops have attempted to smash the workers' picket line. As the striking workers have become more militant and determined, the Liberal state government under acting premier Lindsay Thompson is preparing for a showdown with threats of still more police strikebreaking to come.

The strike by members of the Federated Municipal and Shire Council Employees' Union (MEU) began as a 24-hour walkout on 30 August in support of Waverley Council fellow workers who had gone out two days earlier, opposing a Council plan to bring in private contractors to handle the regular garbage pick-up. Private contractors offer only casual rates and no permanency and Waverley workers fear an immediate loss of 36 jobs if they take over. With a third of Melbourne's municipalities already using

private contractors, victory against Waverley Council is crucial in throwing back a city-wide assault on MEU jobs and conditions. So the ranks overwhelmingly turned the initial 24-hour strike into an indefinite walkout; and on Friday, 5 September, they rejected out of hand a deal concocted before the Arbitration Commission between the Council and the "left" union leadership for a three month "cooling off period" before bringing in the contractors.

With Thompson blustering that "we do not intend to let everyone go down with gastro-enteritis just to avoid a confrontation" (*Herald*, 5 September), the Springvale tip has become a picket line battlefield. Many householders have respected the picket, but a few of Thompson's "ordinary people" have attempted to break through with massive cop protection. The vicious uniformed bosses' thugs have already hospitalised one 63-year old garbage collector, who was hurled under a car trailer.

Victory in this strike requires that all municipal tips be shut tight. The entire

labour movement in Melbourne must be prepared to beat back the cops' strike-breaking. The rest of the MEU must be

brought out. Shut down every Council in Melbourne! Stop the cop thuggery! Victory to the garbos' strike! ■

Australasian

SPARTACIST



Subscribe 11 issues (1 year) — \$3.00

overseas rates: surface mail — \$3 for 11 issues
 airmail \$10 for 11 issues
 Donation \$ _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

mail to/make cheques payable to: POSTCODE _____

Spartacist Publications PHONE _____

GPO Box 3473 Sydney NSW 2001



“Not a bad thing but a good thing”

LaTrobe Uni Socialist Left unravels

MELBOURNE, 3 September — From the days of the anti-Vietnam war struggles to the late 1970s when, uniquely for a major campus, “left” candidates continued to win majorities on the Student Representative Council (SRC), LaTrobe University has been recognised as one of the most political, left-wing campuses in Australia. But while in the early seventies many students became political around the struggle against US imperialism’s brutal war in Indochina, today, the rotten bloc of Libertarian Socialists, ALPers, feminists and “independents” which calls itself the “Socialist Left” appeals simply to ecology nuts, the anti-uranium crowd and liberal anti-Sovietism. Initially born of hatred of Leninist “sectarianism”, and haunted for years by the revolutionary politics of the Spartacist League, this not-so-chummy social clique has been glued together by a voracious appetite for SRC office. Now the Socialist Left sandcastle is disintegrating, and at a furious rate.

Better red than Ted!

In the last two months there have been at least eight resignations from both the SRC and the Socialist Left including such well known “pols” as Graham Proctor, Angela McKie and Geoff Lazarus. The implosion was triggered by a recent strike by the editors of the student newspaper *Rabelais*, Socialist Left honchos Ted Murphy and Fabio Stradijot, against “their” SRC for higher pay and by a later stop-work meeting by SRC office workers for a log of claims. Suddenly, the “socialist” officers “discovered” that the SRC is an employer of labour. For Proctor this was too much — he objected “on prin-

ciple” to being one-eighteenth of an employer as an SRC officer and being a “leftist” as well — so he quit his SRC presidency just seventeen hours after being elected. This “conversion” ill-befits a man who for years served on “left” SRCs — bodies which Libertarian Socialist guru Murphy, in an attack of political honesty back in 1978, admitted act as “a buffer between students and the administration, (which) benefits both the SRC and the administration”. For her part Angela McKie declared she would no longer be a “puppet”, itself a revealing insight into the invidious internal life of Ted’s Bundoora fiefdom, already notorious for its male chauvinist treatment of women members.

As for the “great” *Rabelais* strike, the LaTrobe Uni Spartacist Club, while emphasising its political contempt for Murphy and his censors’ pen, put forward a motion calling on the SRC to meet the strikers demands and requiring that all SRC staff be members of the appropriate union and be paid at least the award wage. Two Socialist Lefters, Peter Summers and Paul Norton, moved instead that Murphy and Stradijot get \$120 take-home pay (as opposed to the \$140 demanded), the increase to be back-dated to the start of the year. Typically, Murphy decided to take the money and run. In accepting the \$120, he argued that this was better than \$140 and no retrospective payment, adding also that it was “impractical” to require SRC staff to be union members!

Enter Chipp — who lashes out

Trying to take advantage of the Socialist Left’s disarray, Ian Farrow’s Australian Democrats, known on campus as Centre Unity, have been printing the Socialist Lefters’ resignation statements. Having already made inroads into their SRC bastion, Farrow is angling to pick up “moderate” Socialist Left pieces. Farrow even brought Don Chipp to campus to impress what he sees as potential recruits. At Chipp’s meeting, the Socialist Left could only scratch its head and look in vain for something to distinguish itself from the Chippocrats — after all, they agree on TEAS, opposition to uranium mining and conscription. It was left to Spartacist supporter, Andrew Georgiou, to take the mike to denounce Chipp as a committed capitalist politician whose “small-is-better philosophy” is no more than a reactionary attack against so-called “big” unions. But when Georgiou documented Chipp’s history as Navy Minister in Gorton’s Liberal government and a hard supporter of conscription and the Vietnam war, this parliamentary “hero” literally lost his cool. Grabbing Georgiou by the collar, Chipp pulled him away from the mike, snapping that this was “his” meeting and that he was only allowing questions. Immediately another Spartacist, Frank Sortino, intervened to bring the ex-minister “Democrat” to order and allow Georgiou to continue. After the meeting both Socialist Left sup-



LaTrobe Uni Afghanistan meeting: Chippocrat Ian Farrow (right) and Socialist Lefters Peter Summers (centre), Paul Norton.

porters and quitters, who had confined themselves to the most innocuous questions, could only grumble that we had “stolen” their points! The inability to draw a class line against Chipp indicates these “socialists” underlying political kinship with Farrow’s mob.

Those who have now jumped the sinking ship evince a deep sourness about their old SRC playpen, with Proctor and company vowing not to run in the upcoming by-elections. The remaining Socialist “Leftovers” are now desperately trying to justify their continued existence in any form. As part of this they are falsifying their political history by claiming as their own the militant actions of the Spartacist Club. But a glance at the record shows that the Socialist Left have done nothing but talk and, in the words of one of their disenchanted supporters, run for elections. It has been the Spartacist Club which has consistently fought for a class-struggle program.

In April 1975, when LaTrobe Uni workers held a campus-wide strike, the Spartacist Club initiated the Strike Support Committee, manned the picket lines with the workers, and fought for a united university-wide strike of all workers and students. The then-Independent Left, in contrast, pitifully announced they would “offer their help if asked by the workers” and flatly opposed the call to broaden the strike! In September 1976, the AUS called a national student strike and Melbourne-wide rally to demand an increase in TEAS. The Spartacist Club mobilised students in support of the rally and worked actively to build support for the strike. But Murphy and his ilk deliberately sabotaged united action by walking out of the strike committee meeting which voted to build the rally. They then organised a film and B-B-Cue at the same time as the main rally, justifying this splitting action with the argument

“student marches won’t achieve anything”.

This year, when the Red Army intervened in Afghanistan to put down Islamic reaction, the Socialist Left was left high and dry, totally unable to distinguish themselves from bourgeois reaction. At the April student general meeting the Socialist Left opposed the Spartacist motion of forthright defence of the Red Army and condemned the Soviet intervention while maintaining the barest figleaf of opposition to the imperialist war drive. Even this was easily amended out by Ian Farrow who called on the Socialist Left to “cut the waffle and bullshit”: after all, they were all on the same side on Afghanistan — against the Red Army, for the Islamic rebels — so why didn’t the Socialist Left say so?

The Socialist Left’s bankruptcy was again underlined when the reformist Socialist Workers Party brought their Iranian co-thinker Fatima Fallahi to campus in July. Her meeting was one of the biggest political events of the year, yet these “leftists” without an Iranian position of their own, could only tail the Spartacist Club as it sharply confronted and exposed Fallahi and the SWP as obscene apologists for Khomeini.

The political collapse and subsequent shredding of the Socialist Left is, as the homiletic Mao put it in another context, “not a bad thing but a good thing”. Its legacy is one of wholesale political corruption and cynicism and avowed class betrayal. For the survivors the outlook is grim. Already the group has announced it is not running a ticket in the SRC elections. There is the drop-out option (organic gardening, perhaps?) or they could drift into the Labor Party apparatus like Con Sarkis and other former Socialist Lefters. Then there is the Chippocrats.

Continued on page 8



Don Chipp: Australian Democrat in a flap.