



# The rights and wrongs of the Spartacists

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The Spartacists' central slogan; 'Down with the Shah. Down with the Mullahs', is in our view seriously mistaken. Firstly the Shah is at the moment the central agent of Anglo-American imperialism. The Mullahs on the other hand are leading mass opposition to the Shah and his foreign advisors. To equate them outrages the anti-imperialist feelings of the Iranian masses. The Spartacists throw together in a hopeless jumble every aspect of the mass movement and label it reactionary. For example they see attacks on the cultural gifts of Western civilisation, pornographic films, luxury hotels, coca-cola stores merely as signs of obscurantism and backwardness. They present the mass demonstrations as 'suicidal advances on the Shah troops' and talk about the 'chilling spectacle of protesters clad in ceremonial white robes' being mown down as 'equally grotesque' as the Shah's claims that few have been killed.

They draw attention to 'ritual self flagellation' on the demonstrations despite the fact that Khomeini has explicitly called for this practice to be abandoned. It is one thing to warn against the anti working class nature of the Shi'ite leaders. It is quite another to fall into using the same phrases as the White House and Downing Street apostles of civilisation and present the religious leaders and their movement as reactionary bigots, no better, or possibly worse than the Shah (after all the Shah does not want to return to the seventh century, condemn women to the wear the veil, etc).

The Spartacists position would in practice rule out an anti-imperialist united front against the Shah in Iran. It would be a suicidal and sectarian position for an Iranian Trotskyist party. In the Imperialist heartland it defocuses from the central tasks of exposing the alibis of the Carters and Owens and mobilising the working class to block arms and supplies to their direct agents in Iran.

On three recent demonstrations in solidarity with the struggle in Iran the Spartacists have been excluded from the march by the organisers.

At the CARL demonstration of December 17th in London, the Spartacist contingent was excluded by the CARL organisers with the full complicity of the IMG. Leading IMG members participated in a cordon to separate the Spartacists from the march. That cordon allowed the police to force their way into the demonstration and so harass the Spartacists until they left the demonstration.

This action by the CARL organisers and the IMG must be condemned. We hold no brief for the principle slogans of the Spartacists. But the CARL/IMG action (supported by the SWP) establishes a precedent of allowing the police so intervene in labour movement and solidarity demonstrations and actions. It means the establishment of bans and proscriptions in the labour movements - a tactic most naturally the property of the Stalinists and labour bureaucrats.

Workers Power along with the ICL and the WSL declared in advance our opposition to the ban on the Spartacists. We will continue to do so on all future demonstrations. In any united front slogans may be raised which other sections of the United Front find objectionable or even reactionary. Differences within the labour movement must be settled by argument, not by the use of goon squads or the capitalist police.