
Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacists

—a bulletin series of opponent material

NUMBER 1

Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group

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Introductory note

This bulletin, published by the Spartacist League/Britain and the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group, reprints two lengthy polemics against our organisation by the Irish Workers Group (IWG), affiliates of the British Workers Power group and its League for a Revolutionary Communist International. In Britain, Workers Power and the Spartacist League are frequently considered to be the leading contenders for the organisation which stands for authentic Trotskyism. The material contained in this collection should enable the reader to arrive at a satisfactory answer to this question.

This is the first "Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacists" bulletin to be published by the SL/B and the DSYG. It continues the tradition begun by our comrades in the Spartacist League/US of reproducing hostile polemics against our tendency.

Since 1975, five of these bulletins have been published by the SL/US: no 1 reprinted a bulletin on the SL by the Internationalist Tendency, a current of the early 1970s coming out of the American Socialist Workers Party which stood somewhat to the left of Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat before decomposing; no 2 reproduced a leftist-sounding critique of the SL by a couple of then-recent ex-members in the process of embracing social democracy; no 3 contained ex-Workers League leader Tim Wohlforth's 1973 pamphlet "What is Spartacist?" written in the service of Gerry Healy; no 4 made available the first issue of the Bolshevik Tendency's publication *1917* featuring their article on "The Robertson School of Party Building", and no 5 contained a series of polemics against the SL by the BT—a collection of embittered ex-members of ours whose motives in their relentless and hostile pursuit of the organisation which they quit are obscure to say the least.

This bulletin begins with an IWG pamphlet entitled "Sectarianism and Stalinophilia: The Politics of the Spartacists" which was published in February of this year. It is followed by another IWG pamphlet published this October called "The Spartacists: A Poisoned Well". As the introduction to the most recent SL/US "Hate Trotskyism" bulletin noted: "we aim to select for attention not the threadbare reformists but rather the more adeptly slithering centrists."

Beginning in the late 1970s, shortly after Workers Power's emergence as an organisation and at a time when by their own admission they had no clear position on the Russian question, we proposed to Workers Power on a number of occasions public debates with the aim of political clarification. Workers Power rejected these

proposals and, following an aborted debate in 1982 which they scuttled by insisting on their proprietary "rights" to exclude an SL literature table, they went on to harden a position of excluding SL supporters from all of their "public" meetings. In the meantime they sought to carve out a niche as the most "left-wing" supporters of any and every "mass movement", all the while remaining carefully within the bounds of what is politically acceptable to the Stalinophobic Labourite milieu which they inhabited. Their refusal to swim against the stream on any account led them to support such movements, like Polish Solidarność, that were counterrevolutionary even in WP's terms.

It is notable that while Workers Power/IWG have for years maintained a posture of dismissive silence towards our polemics, within the space of eight months they have, under the name of the IWG, produced some 28 pages attacking our politics. The timing of this considerable literary output coincides with the sharp right turn that Workers Power/IWG undertook when confronted by the events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. With the collapse of the Stalinist bureaucratic castes posing point blank the alternatives of capitalist restoration or proletarian political revolution, the centrists of Workers Power could no longer walk on two stilts over the Russian question. WP's rightward motion came to a head on their home terrain with the "Butchenko affair". Our articles on this, "Workers Power caught with Russian fascists, Thatcher's scabs" and "Turning on the Butchenko spit", are reprinted in this pamphlet. We have also reprinted a short article from *Workers Hammer* outlining Workers Power's political origins ("Workers Power: the baggage of State Capitalism") as well as a polemical response on East Germany ("Workers Power: right turn on East Germany").

Much of the IWG polemics against us has an hysterical and frenzied quality and a lot of what they say is simply lies made out of whole cloth. Yet for anyone who wants to know what our real positions are, for example on the question of our opposition to racist immigration policies or the fight against national oppression, we uniquely make available back issues of *Workers Hammer* and indexed bound volumes of the SL/US newspaper *Workers Vanguard* and *Spartacist*, our international theoretical and documentary journal. Our reproductions of the IWG's material are taken straight from the originals; responsibility for all typographical, spelling and punctuation errors lies with them.

— 16 November 1990

Sectarianism and Stalinophilia: The Politics of the Spartacists

["international Spartacist tendency" /
"International Communist League"]

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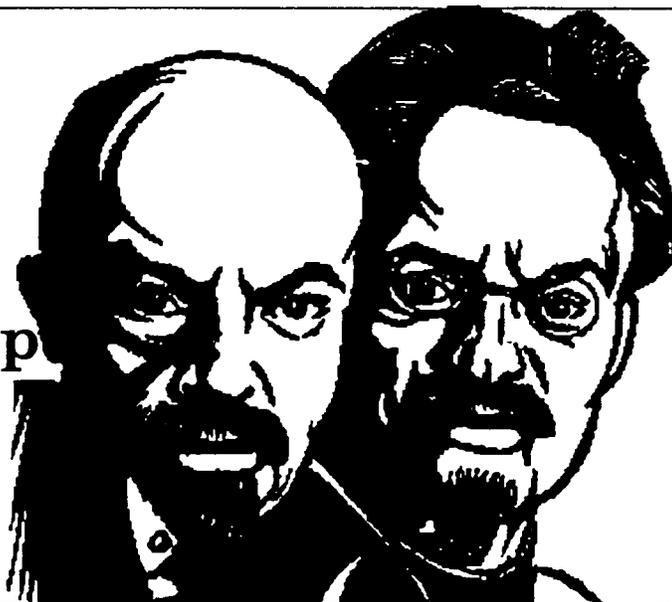
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INTRODUCTION

"IRISH WORKERS GROUP CALLS ON POPE TO EXPEL CHINESE AMBASSADOR"

Such was the lying headline of a whole page of abuse directed against the *Irish Workers Group* and the *League for a Revolutionary Communist International* in the paper of the British Spartacist League in November 1989. It is but their most recent "offensive" against the IWG and the LRCI. It illustrates the method by which the Spartacists deliberately hope to "destroy" all other groups claiming to be Trotskyist. Time and again, honest polemic and debate is substituted by smear, amalgam and deceit.

Their *method*, however, is but an expression of their *politics*. For the twenty-five years of the "international Spartacist tendency" is littered with notorious examples of sectarianism, pro-Stalinism, chauvinism and crass bureaucratic methods, all in the name of Trotskyism. The "ist" is by no means unique in this respect. It is but a dwarf among the other degenerated fragments arising from the breakup of the Trotskyist international—each with its own record of adaptation to national pressures, to Stalinism or to Social democracy etc.

The Spartacists claim that they, as against all others, are the living continuity of Trotskyism, that this continuity was maintained on the national terrain of the United States and that they are its inheritors. In many respects, indeed, their political outlook is defined by USA national-centredness, not least their contemptuous metropolitan chauvinism towards some oppressed peoples.

More important in analysing the Spartacists' brand of politics is to recognize just what they *are* the living continuity of! At heart, their politics is a variant of the *adaptation to Stalinism* which was central in the breakup of the Trotskyist revolutionary tradition into *centrist* fragments pushed and pulled by non-revolutionary forces. The Spartacists are a living continuity of that *centrist* tradition.

East Germany: Spartacists Tail the Stalinists

It is particularly relevant at the moment to understand the Spartacists from this aspect. The events in Eastern Europe have created new openings for centrists and revolutionaries to intervene. While all of the international tendencies, including the LRCI, struggle to win activists to our programmes in these countries and in the USSR etc., the Spartacists have demagogically portrayed themselves as leading masses of workers on a revolutionary road in the German Democratic Republic where they aim to run a few candidates in the forthcoming elections. In fact they have *openly* espoused *peaceful* relations with the Stalinists!

Whatever the *claims* they make in their own press, whatever the actual numbers they may recruit from among those fleeing the sinking ship of the ruling Stalinist party (SED), the decisive question

is *what programme, strategy and tactics* are they winning these people to? What, beneath the demagogy, are the actual politics of the Spartacists when faced with movements of political revolution against Stalinism in which large the mass of workers have yet to be won to a consciously *socialist* programme.

Their past record, especially on Poland and Afghanistan, guarantees that the Spartacists will ultimately not take the side of working class revolutionary struggle against Stalinism.

Rescuing the unfalsified tradition of Revolutionary Communism

The roots and history of this characteristic of the Spartacists were summarised in 1982 by the IWG and Workers Power (Britain) in *The Degenerated Revolution—The Origin and Nature of the Stalinist States*. Currently out of print, we present excerpts from the book in this pamphlet in relation to the *Stalinophilia* of the Spartacists.

But before that, we examine the Spartacists in the context of the degeneration of the fragments of Trotskyism internationally. This is adapted from our book *The Death Agony of the Fourth International and the Tasks of Trotskyists Today* (1983) in which we characterised, in 1982, each of the degenerate fragments of Trotskyism, including the "international Spartacist tendency".

That book, by Workers Power and the IWG, was a major step in establishing the case for a *new* Trotskyist programme and a new international, in the recognition that *no* existing "Trotskyist" organisation had in fact maintained and re-applied Trotsky's programme to the post-war world.

The Spartacists jibe at the LRCI for daring to re-elaborate the revolutionary communist programme for the new world period ("Is Trotsky's 1938 programme not good enough for you?"). Without facing this task, however, an international revolutionary tendency can only lead militants into a cul-de-sac, or worse, into outright treachery to the proletariat, whether in Berlin, Warsaw, Palestine, South Africa or Chicago.

In January of this year the LRCI published *The Trotskyist Manifesto, a New Transitional Programme for World Socialist Revolution*. It is the fruit of 15 years of struggle to overcome centrism and to lay the basis for the new revolutionary communist international. It is rooted in the most thorough theoretical work within the Leninist Trotskyist tradition. It was hammered out in struggle, in debate and in deepening co-operation among groups breaking with the different centrist fragments of Trotskyism in Austria, Bolivia, Britain, France, Germany, Ireland, Peru and. It is a *manual of action*, therefore, for a truly international tendency which emerged and defined itself from the start against all forms of national-centredness. *Read it! Discuss with us! Join us!*

The Spartacists and Political Revolution in 1989/90

Bitter Fruits of the Spartacists' Bloc

With General Jaruzelski

Trotsky recognised the legitimacy of a strictly delimited united front with the Stalinist Bureaucracy against military attack by imperialism. But every day extra that they remained in power undermined the post-capitalist basis of society in the degenerated workers' state:—

Should the 'faction of Butenko' prove to be in alliance with Hitler, then the 'faction of Reiss' would defend the USSR from military intervention, inside the country as well as on the world arena. Any other course would be a betrayal. Although it is thus impermissible to deny in advance the possibility, in strictly defined instances, of a 'united front' with the Thermidorian bureaucracy, each day added to its domination helps rot the foundations of the socialist elements of economy and increases the chances for capitalist restoration" (Trotsky, Transitional Programme).

The period of political revolutionary struggle which opened in Poland in 1980 saw the Spartacists quickly form a *strategic bloc* with the 'thermidorian bureaucracy', the Stalinists. Taking sides with Jaruzelski's brutal offensive against the workers' movement, the Spartacists claimed to be defending the post-capitalist property system in Poland against imperialist reaction. Eight years later it is plain for all to see that their preferred allies, Jaruzelski and the Stalinist bureaucracy, have preferred to co-operate in the *government-led* drive to hand over Poland to private capitalism lock, stock and barrel. In the very nature of Stalinism, the last thing Jaruzelski & Co. were prepared to do was to rally a mass independent workers' movement from below to resist capitalist restoration!

All the mass movements which have arisen in 1989-90 against Stalinist rule, from China to Romania, have been politically *confused*, suspicious of slogans for *socialist* alternatives, and subject to leaderships with programmes alien to the historic interests of the working class—and understandably so, given the oppression, inequality and misery they had suffered for generations at the hands of regimes claiming to be socialist, claiming to offer them the benefits of "planned economy".

Those movements thus had no clear objective beyond the destruction of the Stalinist dictatorship. The fact that social counter-revolutionaries were involved did not absolve revolutionaries from supporting and participating in mass action by workers to completely oust the Stalinist rulers and break up their military and bureaucratic apparatus of political rule.

This was especially the case with the mass Solidarnosc movement in Poland. In our Theses on

Poland, *The 18th Brumaire of General Jaruzelski*, we argued in 1982, as throughout the period before the Jaruzelski coup, that the Solidarnosc leadership was dominated by a tendency to compromise the workers' opposition to Stalinism, to confine their struggles to piecemeal *reforms* in Poland; and secondly by a tendency to outright capitalist restoration. They thus parleyed with the Stalinists and the Church, and held back and sought to demobilise the workers. The Stalinists showed their gratitude with a bloody coup and a declaration of war against the Polish workers.

Far from planning a reactionary military coup as alleged by Jaruzelski and parroted by the Spartacists, Walesa deliberately refused to rally mass working class action against Jaruzelski's suppression of Solidarnosc.

As against the Stalinist dictatorship, we gave unconditional support to the mobilisations of the workers for their demands for better conditions and wages, union rights, etc. and we argued, as against the Solidarnosc leadership, for the development of this living movement of struggle into the outright political revolution against the regime.

The task of revolutionary communists was to stand with the Polish workers in their mass struggles against economic austerity and for democratic rights against Polish Stalinism, and to fight to develop those struggles to the *revolutionary destruction* of the Stalinist bureaucracy and its repressive apparatus; fighting at all points to win the workers to place the planned economy under the control of their own workers' councils and militias—as the *only* sure basis to defend the post-capitalist property forms, and the *only* basis for re-opening the road to international socialism.

The Spartacists, by contrast, in terror of contamination by cross-kissing Catholic *workers* rushed headlong into the embrace of the Polish *Stalinist* dictatorship. Not only have they the blood of the anti-Stalinist proletariat on their hands but *events have now demonstrated* that siding with Jaruzelski *did nothing* to defend post-capitalist property in Poland or to win workers to a Trotskyist alternative.

Instead of the Solidarnosc leadership being driven into crisis by developing the mass movement against Stalinism, the renewed repression of the masses and the wheeling and dealing of the Stalinists with Walesa and the imperialists, resulted in huge political gains for precisely the most pro-capitalist elements in Solidarnosc, and the most dramatic drive imaginable to restore capitalism.

As we argued in *Class Struggle* in October '89 (*Whither Poland?*) the Solidarnosc which stood in the 1989 elections was a self-selected clique from among committees of Catholic intellectuals, priests and the new growing capitalist class. Walesa & Co. had resolutely obstructed any attempt to call a

Congress of the Solidarnosc "union". Its membership had been slashed to a fifth of its 1981 level.

The role of Walesa's leadership and the repression of the mass of workers—against which he had *refused* to mobilize direct workers' action—had enabled him to separate himself from any pressure of the mass of workers and thus to constitute a consciously bourgeois government. So much for the Spartacists' support for Jaruzelski's coup to supposedly defend the Polish workers' state from reactionary capitalist restorationists! Far from opening up conditions "for the crystallisation of a Leninist Trotskyist party" (*Workers Vanguard* 295), it created the conditions for both the Stalinists

and Walesa to escape from the class pressure of the workers.

At all times the IWG and our international tendency have proudly stood for a consistently Trotskyist programme and strategy and for the tactics which alone could have related it to the actual living reality of the Polish political revolutionary upheaval. It is nothing but a smear and a lie for the Spartacists, as they do repeatedly, to accuse us of political capitulation to Walesa and even to the ultra-right KPN in Poland. It is not our programme comrades, but *your* common strategy with Stalinism which, by crushing the mobilisation of the Polish workers, opened the door to a pro-capitalist government in Poland.

EAST BERLIN 1990

The Spartacists Make Their Peace with Stalinism Once Again

From the outbreak of the political-revolutionary crisis in the GDR we find the Spartacists proclaiming—*For political revolution in East Germany! and Workers Soviets must rule in all Germany!* We look in vain, however, to find any actual spelling out of these slogans, in terms of *revolutionary* tasks, for the working class of Berlin/GDR where the Spartacists are concentrating their work internationally. However many hundred thousand leaflets they may dispense, however many votes their token candidates may get in the elections, the decisive question is what are they *actually* arguing to the militants of the class.

Eager to proclaim themselves around the world—deceitfully—as the representatives of Trotskyism in the GDR, their press reprints copious leaflets, speeches and statements reflecting their activity in Berlin. Much of it has centred on an "East Berlin Protest Against Fascist Desecration of Soviet War Memorial" at which, they assert, "250,000 Say: No Nazis in East Germany".

The Spartacists claim credit for the demonstration by over 200,000 workers in Berlin. The cold print of *Workers Vanguard* reports, rather, that they first wrote to the Soviet military commander in Germany expressing shock on behalf of "broad layers of the populace" at the defacing of a Soviet war memorial by fascists. They issued a call for a demonstration at the monument and "brought this call directly to the SED leadership"—the party of the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy. The SED did indeed call such a demonstration, having it announced on radio. As the Spartacists admit

"Of course the SED government of the DDR has used the neo-Nazi menace as an argument for reorganizing and strengthening the state security apparatus"

Indeed! This throws considerable light on the Stalinists' enthusiasm to rally such a large crowd.

And did the Spartacist speakers at the rally warn against the strengthening of the security apparatus? Did they argue there or in any of their literature that the workers must organise to *overthrow* and completely break up the armed Stalinist apparatus which prevents the workers from exercising political power? No! The Stasi are criticised, rather, as a parasitic economic burden on society, outweighing the "minor privileges" of the bureaucracy!! Those who raided the Stasi are merely tools of the extreme right!

That same day the fascist Republikaner party, meeting near Munich, declared itself the spearhead of "reunification now" while vituperating against Communists, Jewish leaders and foreign workers.

The next day, a mob invaded the headquarters of the former State Security (Stasi) in East Berlin. The right wing is seeking to exploit widespread hatred of the Stasi, whose brutal methods escalated in the last years of Honecker's rule. This extended to the factories, where there were many who drew a second pay-check every month for spying on their fellow workers. The government reported to the Round Table meeting with opposition parties on January 15th that the Stasi had employed 85,000 people and more than 100,000 collaborators, and consumed 3.6 billion marks, 1.5 percent of the entire state budget. The dead weight of the secret police needed to defend bureaucratic rule is a far greater burden on the economy than the comparatively minor privileges enjoyed by the upper layer of bureaucrats. (WV 494, p.5)

These "minor" privileges of the bureaucracy are sufficiently valuable to be the *material basis* for maintaining the counter-revolutionary rule of this huge social caste, undermining the whole post-capitalist system, oppressing the working class and blocking the road to socialism in Germany and internationally! The significance of the Stasi is not how much they cost but that they protect the bureaucracy and must be completely smashed! The

Spartacists claim that the SED's monopoly of power has been broken. The truth is that the state power of the ruling counter-revolutionary bureaucracy *remains intact!*

In all of their reports of speeches, statements and leaflets, the *political revolution* never amounts to anything more than a perspective of *reform*. The need for workers' councils is presented not as a weapon of revolutionary struggle against the apparatus but one-sidedly as a form of economic control and as future organs of workers' democratic rule. A *Spartakist-Gruppen* address to their own public meeting makes this abundantly clear—

Decision-making must rest with those who produce value.

That is why we say: Organize, create for yourselves organs of political power. Nothing other than this lies behind our slogan for workers and soldiers councils to power. A first key task of these councils is the demand to open the books. That means that the present economic situation of the enterprises must be revealed to the working people. Put an end to the secret negotiations behind the backs of the workers. Read our "Open letter" and you will think of other questions ...

...the course of the present government is dangerous and undermines the foundations of the workers' state. (WV 494 p.8)

No hint here that the present government is that of a counter-revolutionary caste maintaining a dictatorship by armed force against the working class! The programme of political revolution of Trotsky is thus fudged into a *reform* programme while the emphasis of propaganda, like that of the SED itself, appeals to the German tradition of the revolutionaries Luxemburg and Liebknecht.

Repeatedly we find references to the Stalinist system as "*abusive*" rather than counter-revolutionary or in any way fundamentally opposed to the interests of the working class. Indeed, the Stalinist bureaucratic overthrow of capitalism in East Germany is presented as a wholly progressive act —

"Despite Stalinist dogma and despite Stalin's beheading of the Red Army, the Soviet working people smashed Hitlerite fascism. It was they, comrades, who "exported" the revolution to the Elbe—on the bayonets of the Red Army, founded by Leon Trotsky." (Reply to Neues Deutschland Stalinists, in WV, Special Supplement, 12 Jan 1990)

It was not proletarian revolution by Stalinist bureaucracy and the crushing of the workers which was exported on *Stalinists* bayonets! By the early 1930s, the Soviet Armed Forces had long ceased to be in any sense the Red Army Trotsky created! Its mission in Germany in 1945, after the smashing of the Nazis, was a thoroughly counter-revolutionary one. Stalin's global strategy was one of reactionary *détente* with imperialism. He enthusiastically co-operated in putting down workers' revolution everywhere. He handed back Finland and Austria to imperialism while *keeping capitalism intact* in the countries of Eastern Europe. When he could not get imperialist co-operation in neutralising this buffer zone he moved to fully crush all independent organisations of the workers and expropriated

capitalism as the only guarantee against the resurgence of pro-imperialist bourgeoisies within his zone! What the Spartacists are now preaching to the Stalinists of the East German SED is an unmitigated Stalinist interpretation of the role of the Kremlin in Germany in 1945-50!

Indeed, even the present wave of mass protest against Stalinist rule in the GDR, we are told is due to the benevolence of the Kremlin. The Spartacist speaker at the war memorial rally is reported by WV as follows—

"Comrades, as you know, the SED's monopoly of power has been broken. The masses are free to speak their minds. Learn to listen to them. It is only through the benevolent pressure of the Soviet Army that this has been made possible" (Special Supplement, p.8)

The truth is rather that Gorbachev had decided that the post-capitalist system in Germany could be sacrificed to imperialism in the interests of *détente*. It was for this reactionary strategy, and not out of benevolence, that Gorbachev, with his armed forces in the GDR, was able to threaten Honecker and prevent him gunning down the mass demonstrations of the workers in November 1989!

The powerful bourgeois workers party in the other Germany (SPD) is rapidly becoming a major force in the East in the approaching elections. The Spartacists make no secret of their clear preference for the Stalinist SED over the SPD/SDP. Their mass leaflet for the war memorial demo argued—

Resurgent fascism is still an extremist fringe phenomenon. It would again threaten all mankind as soon as the first crises in a reunified Grosdeutschland appear. Today, however, the SPD/SDP is the chief instrument to bring about such a Greater Germany. Throttling the hydra-headed fascist monster now is to blunt this Social Democratic penetration. (WV special supplement)

The same supplement claims—

And at the DDR's Round Table conference the East German SDP demanded the SED disavow the TLD/SG [Spartacist] call which termed the social democrats "the Trojan horse of counter-revolution".

For Trotskyists, however, there can be no preference between Stalinism and Social Democracy. Both are counter-revolutionary parties and programmes in the working class.

Spartacists Declare Peace With Stalinism

Nothing could more clearly express the treachery of the Spartacists to the Trotskyist programme of political revolution than their crawling letter "to Commander of Soviet Forces in Germany". Here we see them publicly *disown* the need for revolutionary violence against the Stalinist bureaucracy—

"We warn that those who call for violence are doing the work of the imperialists, who at all costs want to undermine the peaceful development of the political revolution unfolding in the DDR." (Letter to Commander of Soviet Forces in Germany, Workers' Vanguard, 26 Jan 1990, p.7)

**THE IWG/LRCI DEFENDS THE
TROTSKYIST
PROGRAMME OF POLITICAL
REVOLUTION!**

The propaganda of the LRCI in the GDR stands in clear revolutionary contrast to the crystallised confusion and centrist fudge of the Spartacists' brand of "Trotskyism". A leaflet distributed on a Berlin demonstration against capitalist restoration is reprinted in *Class Struggle* (Feb. 1990). It contains the following unambiguous statement—

Smash the Stalinist Dictatorship

The old gang have been forced out of office but much of their machine is still there. The power of working class mobilisation has demobilised the Stasi. Good! But the working class has not yet imposed its own law and its own order on society. When capitalists and Stalinists both talk of the need for "stability" they mean preserving and regrouping the forces of repression that they both hope to use in the future against the working class.

Consistent revolutionaries will never forget that the state is "essentially special bodies of armed men" as Engels said and Deng Xiaoping proved once again in Tiananmen Square. The Stalinists' "armed bodies of men" must be completely disbanded and broken up by the workers' organisations. Break down their discipline, for soldiers' committees in all barracks and soldiers' councils in all regiments and divisions, for the election of officers, the ending of privilege and for maximum wages to be based on those of a skilled worker.

For a workers' militia of rank and file men and women to defend the factories, the working class organisations and meetings. Hunt down the Stalinist parasites and spies, keep out the capitalist speculators, disband the repressive apparatus, impose working class control of production and distribution!"

Trotsky on Defending the USSR

To conclude on the Spartacists' subordination of the political revolution to the Stalinist "defence" of the workers' states, we quote Trotsky's letter to Max Shactman.

"You seem to forget the so-called "thesis on Clemenceau" which signified that in the interests of the genuine defence of the USSR the proletarian vanguard can be obliged to eliminate the Stalin government and replace it with its own. This was proclaimed in 1927. Five years later we explained to the workers that this change of government can be effectuated only by political revolution. Thus we separated fundamentally our defence of the USSR as a workers' state from the bureaucracy's defence of the USSR. ...

At the end of your speech you quote Trotsky's formula concerning the necessity of subordinating the defence of the nationalised property in the USSR to the interests of the world revolution and you continue: "...the term implies either that there is a conflict between the two or the possibility of such a conflict". ...

Tacitly you infer that the Kremlin's (not our) policy of defence can come into conflict with the interests of the world revolution. Of course! At every step! In every respect! (Trotsky, In Defence of Marxism, p.39-40)

The Origins of the Spartacists in the degenerating fragments of Trotsky's Fourth International.

Adapted from

The Death Agony of the Fourth International and the Tasks of Trotskyists Today.

IWG/Workers Power, 1984

Ten years after the first Congress of Trotsky's Fourth International, the revolutionary communists who had survived the War were isolated and defeated. The Transitional Programme of 1938 had contained a perspective of revolutionary upheavals, mortal crisis for the Stalinist bureaucracy and for capitalist economy alike. Events took a very different course.

The error in those perspectives was of a kind faced previously by Marx, Engels and Lenin, an error which telescoped the timetable for the exhaustion of capitalism, but one inseparable also from a necessary revolutionary optimism. A similar error of perspective was addressed in 1921 by Trotsky in the Communist International—

When we spoke of the revolution resulting from the world war, it meant that we were and are striving to utilise the consequences of the world war in order to speed the revolution in every way possible.

Trotsky devoted a major part of his energies in the 1930s to re-elaborating the communist programme to address the changed world reality. Had he lived till 1948 he would have undertaken that task anew. But the isolated and defeated leaders of the Fourth International could not face the fact that they were passing from an aborted revolutionary period (1944/45), to a counter-revolutionary period led by "democratic" imperialism. They sought to justify still the "orthodox" perspectives of the 1938 programme. Unable to apply the programme in a scientific way on this basis to the new events, the leadership of Pablo and Mandel began to transform Trotsky's tactics, strategy and programme in a piecemeal and empirical fashion—while proclaiming fidelity to the document of 1938! Blind optimism, dogmatism and adaptation to non-revolutionary forces increasingly dominated.

The second Congress of the FI in 1948 did not yet sanctify these errors in its formal resolutions. But as its world view became increasingly at variance with reality, the orthodoxy of the FI became more fragile. All that was needed to destroy the trappings of fidelity to Trotsky's method was a sharp twist in world events.

That twist in events came almost immediately. In the summer of 1948 the Tito-Stalin split was made public. The Yugoslav Communist Party (YCP) was outcast by Stalin, denounced variously as "Trotskyist" or "Fascist". Tragically the FI saw these events as a new confirmation of their former perspectives. They saw Yugoslavia as the predicted

crisis of Stalinism. They re-cast Tito's partisan war in retrospect as a "proletarian revolution" which had supposedly created a relatively healthy, if somewhat deformed, workers' state. Tito's parasitic bureaucracy was no longer counter-revolutionary but Leninist! The implications were far-reaching and permeated the whole politics of the FI.

This position was formally ratified by the FI and all its major sections and leading figures at the 1951 Third World Congress. There was no revolutionary opposition to Pablo's position that—

In Yugoslavia, the first country where the proletariat took power since the degeneration of the USSR, Stalinism no longer exists today as an effective factor in the workers' movement ...

This fundamentally negated Trotsky's understanding of Stalinism—that it is a counter-revolutionary force; that under all conditions the Stalinists will obstruct the working class from taking political power directly into its own hands for its own class interests. Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism, as *contradictory* but overall counter-revolutionary even when it breaks up along national social-patriotic lines, was junked.

The subsequent political degeneration of the FI, growing opportunism towards reformism, nationalism etc. led to a split in 1953 into the *International Secretariat* and the *International Committee*. Neither section embodied a revolutionary opposition to the political degeneration.

The US section, the Socialist Worker's Party (SWP), despite later attacking "Pabloism", nevertheless accepted all of the tenets of Pablo's positions. The SWP turned against him only as a result of his "interference" in the United States section itself.

In 1951 the Third World Congress of the International explicitly adopted wrong positions on Stalinism, on Yugoslavia, and in its general perspectives of an impending global "civil war". This marked a complete *programmatic* collapse of the Fourth International as a *revolutionary* leadership. That *no section* voted against the Yugoslav resolution, the cornerstone of all the errors, is a fact of enormous significance. The FI as a *whole* had collapsed into *centrism*—adaptation to non-proletarian-revolutionary forces. From this point on, the task facing Trotskyists was to create a Leninist-Trotskyist international on the basis of a re-elaborated programme of revolutionary

communism. Manoeuvres to replace the leadership were entirely insufficient. The programmatic basis had to be changed. It was not done then nor attempted by any international tendency during 40 subsequent years of fragments and splinters.

Disorientation after the war had led to a programmatic collapse of the Fourth International. After the Third (Communist International) had collapsed programmatically the International Left Opposition continued fighting to reform it because it *contained within it a mass movement*. After the FI's programmatic collapse, and the failure of an Opposition to materialise, the FI was left without a programme and had never contained a mass vanguard within it. The FI, unlike the Communist International, *was its programme* in an essential sense. That is why we say that after 1951, whatever the tactics that may have been employed to win over sections of the disintegrating international, authentic Trotskyists had to elaborate a new programme and build the international anew.

The principal tendencies that emerged from the 1953 split failed either then or subsequently to raise themselves out of centrism. Neither the *International Committee* nor the *International Secretariat*, nor any of the tendencies claiming continuity with them, have proved capable of regenerating a democratic-centralist international based upon a transitional programme re-elaborated to encompass the new circumstances and tasks of the period since 1944.

Certain groupings today claim that the International Committee "tradition" represents the revolutionary continuity of Trotskyism. This so-called "IC tradition", however, is a myth. *"The Death Agony of the Fourth International"* gives a detailed account of its record.

Among the groups defending the "IC tradition" is the Spartacist League whose "international Spartacist tendency" in 1989 restyled itself the "International Communist League". How did the Spartacist League emerge within the *International Committee* current?

From American SWP to Robertson's Spartacists

In 1963 the question of the Cuban revolution caused a major realignment among IS and IC groups. The Socialist Workers Party in the US crossed over from the IC to the IS current. They shared with the IS the liquidationist view that Cuba was a relatively healthy workers' state, that Castro & Co. were really unconscious Trotskyists etc. The major organisations in the "IC tradition"—under Gerry Healy in Britain and Pierre Lambert in France—had no alternative method of analysis. Rather than accept the conclusions of the International Secretariat bloc (the United Secretariat of the FI, USFI ever since), they simply denied that capitalism had been abolished in Cuba!

After 1963 the major fragments underwent repeated splintering. One of the earliest splinters from the "International Committee" was the Spartacists. Originating in the SWP(USA) as the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) in 1961, the

Spartacist grouping saw itself initially as the defender of IC orthodoxy inside the American SWP.

The group centred on a number of youth around Tim Wohlforth (later to abandon them) and James Robertson. While it recoiled in horror from the SWP's liquidationist positions on Cuba, it could not provide a coherent scientific alternative explanation of the Cuban events. Robertson and the Spartacists insisted, in an idealist fashion, that the Cuban workers' state had been ushered in by a "petit-bourgeois government" (the Castroites) who, from 1959-60 presided over a state whose class character was indeterminate. Such a standpoint in Cuba would have left Trotskyists without an operative programme for soviets and a workers' militia to contest the rule of the Castroites and of capitalism in this period.

The Spartacist grouping itself was soon to split, under attack from the SWP leadership. Robertson decided to characterise the SWP as no longer revolutionary but *centrist*, resulting in a rupture internally. Internationally, this led to a break with Gerry Healy's British section of the International Committee. Healy had been using the Spartacists as a means of pressurising the American SWP leadership from going over to the rival "International Secretariat" of Ernest Mandel.

Robertson was correct to identify the SWP's politics as *centrist*, though they were over ten years late in their dating of this political degeneration to 1958. The SWP's position on Cuba was entirely of a piece with the capitulation to Tito of 1948!

However formally correct their position on the SWP, Robertson's group was wrong in its position on the "International Committee". Becoming the Spartacist League in 1964, Robertson saw their place as being within the "orthodox" and increasingly sectarian IC, dominated by Gerry Healy's *Socialist Labour League* in Britain (to become the WRP in 1973). Thus it failed to develop, not only on Cuba, but also on the question of the IC itself, a rounded programmatic alternative to the the degenerate fragments of Trotskyism.

Its call for the "rebirth" of the Fourth International" was founded upon acceptance of the political method of Gerry Healy's organisation in Britain and Pierre Lambert's in France as good coin. The Spartacists were not uncritical of these organisations but their criticisms were premised on the belief that as sections of the IC they were qualitatively superior to the International Secretariat tradition. Thus Robertson told the IC conference in April 1966:

We are present at this conference on the basis of our fundamental agreement with the International Resolution of the IC; moreover, the report of Comrade Slaughter was for us solidly communist, unified throughout by revolutionary determination. (Marxist Bulletin 9, p.5)

This sycophancy to Gerry Healy's chief intellectual hack availed them little. The conference ended with Gerry Healy expelling the Spartacist League from the IC, in essence because of the polite criticisms of the IC raised by Robertson.

The failure to go beyond a negative response to the "Pabloism" of the International/United

Secretariat on Cuba, and their loyalty to the International Committee, prevented the Spartacists from developing towards revolutionary communism. Their errors became codified into a

bad method, marked henceforth by a rabid and increasingly right-wing sectarianism.

The Method of the Spartacists —Sectarians to the Core

The Spartacist conception of a “fighting propaganda group” is *passive* and propagandist in nature and therefore sectarian. Their method is succinctly expressed:

We recognise that a currently embryonic party organisation must necessarily constitute itself in the form of a 'fighting propaganda group' in order by destroying ostensibly revolutionary organisations, [i.e. rival Trotskyist groups] to initiate and/or drive forward a regroupment process in order thereby to build up one's own organisation.

Combined with its demolition-squad approach to rival tendencies is a chronically minimal involvement in the class struggle or the organisations of the labour movement. The fig-leaf of a little “exemplary” work is maintained but even here it is stressed that this is not real leadership of real struggles:

In doing so the character of this work must always be regarded as exemplary, rejecting out of hand any voluntaristic notion of intervening as a propaganda group into all the daily struggles of the working class inasmuch as this would lead to dissipating one's own forces and to liquidating the programme. (Quoted in J.Lister, Spartacist Truth Kit, 1982,p.12)

There are two distortions of the concept of a “fighting propaganda group” here. First, the fighting propaganda group is portrayed as a stage during which the main task is to “destroy” other groups. Note the choice of words. The Spartacists seek not to win leftward moving centrist groups to communism, but to destroy them as obstacles. This perspective leads characteristically to politically disloyal manoeuvres and provocations. In place of political debate, political combat and the destruction of opponents’ political arguments, Spartacist groups have engaged in a vicious circle of disruptions, physical confrontations, occupations of meeting rooms and pickets of other tendencies’ events. The international Spartacist tendency consequently developed from a sect into a cult.

Integrally linked to this mission to “destroy” all other tendencies is their adamant refusal to get involved in what they consider to be “minor” struggles of the working class. Their tasks are conceived of in rigid stages; first destroy the left groups, then turn to the class. Thus, although as an organisation they do intervene in strikes they consider to be of national importance, individual members (unless they are assigned “exemplary work”) abstain from any union activity at work.

During the Health Strike in Britain in 1982 their members in the NHS studiously refused to get involved in any activity around the strike. This story is repeated in many other instances. The

Spartacists’ notion of a fighting propaganda group is a thoroughly abstentionist one. The fighting is only with left groups, not with the class enemy and its agents in the mass organisations of the working class, and the propaganda does not concretely relate to the key struggles of the proletariat.

The “fighting propaganda group” is not, for the Spartacists, a vehicle for programmatic re-elaboration (they do not count this among their tasks), a vehicle for carrying focussed propaganda into the working class (they de-prioritise such propaganda) or a painful but necessary step which communists strive to outgrow (they revel in remaining a propaganda group). The Spartacist conception of a fighting propaganda group is not ours. Ours is rooted in the methods of Lenin and Trotsky. Their conception is alien to the communist tradition.

The content of the Spartacists’ propaganda is frequently abuse. Where they do have distinct positions the Spartacists show a complete lack of understanding of the basic tenets of the Marxist programme.

The Spartacists have developed scandalously right-wing positions on the national question in backward countries. They reject Lenin’s theory of imperialism (tactily) and its understanding of oppressed and oppressor nations. In its place they have put concepts such as states consisting of “interpenetrated peoples”. The national rights of *all* “interpenetrated peoples” weigh equally for the Spartacists.

Northern Ireland

Thus in Northern Ireland the Protestant community are “interpenetrated with the Catholics”. Their “national” rights have to be carefully protected as a priority equal with fighting imperialist oppression! This position ignores the fact that one section of these “interpenetrated peoples”—the Catholics—have been imprisoned in a pro-imperialist, artificially imposed statelet. They are subjected to pro-imperialist rule with the complicity of the other people—the Protestants.

The national rights of the whole of the Irish people have been subverted by the creation of the Northern statelet. Those fighting to smash that state—the Republicans—despite the inadequacies of their programme, should be supported unconditionally, though critically, by Marxists in Britain. They cannot be equated with the agents of imperialism in the North, the loyalists, as just another side of the same sectarian coin.

The Spartacists are, instead, unsparing in denouncing, in front of the British working class, the “sectarian” violence of the Republicans. They

fail to put to the fore, in Britain, the unconditional defence of the anti-imperialist struggle against the British state. Marxists betray those in struggle against imperialism when, in Britain, they teach workers to make their support for the IRA against their own state conditional on not carrying out sectarian acts. *In Ireland*, it is the right of revolutionaries and militants within the working class to place conditions on their critical support for any action by the Republicans, for it is *within the Irish working class* that the alternative to Republican leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle must be built. This is a *necessary* difference of emphasis between oppressor and oppressed countries in applying the international programme in the living struggle.

Attacks in which civilians are killed are described by the Spartacists in Britain as "indefensible" and presented to the British working class by them as "criminal" actions by the IRA. However disastrous or evidently sectarian particular actions of the IRA may be, the task in Britain is always to clearly place the responsibility for the consequences on the British state. Only within that emphasis is it permissible to make the criticisms of the Republicans' methods and programme. Ironically, when an IRA action appears to be non-sectarian and kills soldiers, the Spartacists revel in it *uncritically*. Hence their praise for the killing of marines at Deal in Britain which achieved nothing other than to set back the struggle for a workers' movement for Troops Out Now.

Rejecting the Anti-Imperialist United Front

The concept of "interpenetrated peoples" is little more than a gloss for the Spartacists' *abstentionism* in the conflict between the oppressed and their imperialist oppressors. The Spartacists, not surprisingly, apply this method to Israel. The Zionist state becomes a case of "interpenetrated peoples"—the Hebrew masses and the Palestinians—whose national rights have to be respected. The blacks and the Boer Afrikaners in South Africa are another case in point. In all cases they ignore or minimise the role of imperialism and refuse to actually apply Lenin's fundamental standpoint of the difference between oppressed and oppressor nations.

Indeed their great sensitivity to the "national" rights of the Zionist colonists, Protestant bigots and Afrikaner racists contrasts sharply with their venomous attacks on the latter's victims. Underlying all of these positions is a metropolitan chauvinism and an aversion to petit-bourgeois led nationalist movements and an identification with privileged sections of the proletariat—Protestants in Northern Ireland, Jews in Israel, or labour aristocrats such as the whites in South Africa.

In Spartacist eyes, the social and political backwardness of the masses in the semi-colonial countries makes them equally guilty with the Imperialist powers which oppress them and keep them backward. These positions led to the most pronounced case of abstentionism in the Iranian revolution of 1978/9. Here the mullah-led movement

was equated with the USA's puppet, the Shah, in the self-confessedly inoperable slogan "Down with the Shah! Down with the Mullahs!" The Spartacists completely abjured the tactic of the anti-imperialist united front, which they also reject in theory, stigmatising it as a "Popular Front". Thus when Iranian militants seized the US embassy in Teheran in 1979 the *Australasian Spartacist* carried the headline—"Khomeini fanatics provoke imperialist threat"! No side could be taken between the Imperialists and the "mullahs who want to return to the seventh century".

Here again they revealed an inability to distinguish between imperialist countries and their semi-colonial victims. In its place they argued for a strategy of ideological combat against the *religious ideas* of the Iranian masses. They ended up, once again, holding an abstentionist position in the test of revolution, and justified it with rationalist, idealist arguments that owed more to Voltaire than Marx and Lenin. In the revolutionary communist tradition, however, the method of the anti-imperialist united front is the principled fight by communists for joint action by the proletariat, in temporary conditional alliance with their *class enemy*, when the latter leads indigenous nationalist movements in *real struggle* against imperialism. For Lenin and Trotsky such a method in no sense whatever implied political capitulation to the nationalists. To repudiate this method meant rejecting the internationalist duty of the communists *and* the chance to fight concretely for the communist programme within the ranks of those in struggle.

Supporting Racist Immigration Controls

A refusal to identify with the struggles of the oppressed also results in a reactionary identification with the bosses' attempts to keep immigrants out of the metropolitan countries. The Spartacists advocate a *racist* position on immigration controls:

However, on a sufficiently large scale, immigration plans could wipe out the national identity of the recipient country ...

If, for example, there were unlimited immigration into Northern Europe, the population influx from the Mediterranean basin would tend to dissolve the continued identity of small countries like Holland and Belgium.

The job of Leninists is to protect this national identity according to the Spartacists!

Adaptation to Stalinism

As well as scab positions on the national question, the other distinctive feature of the Spartacists is their adaptation to Stalinism. Starting from the anti-Trotskyist position that Stalinism has a *dual nature*—a good side and a bad side (see below on Stalinophilia)—the Spartacists see their role as encouraging the good side which has increasingly come to the fore. In Afghanistan this meant "Hailing the Red Army" as the agents of revolution for this backward country—the masses of which get treated to a tirade of chauvinist abuse from the Spartacists.

The political revolutionary situation in Poland in 1980-81 was also not to the liking of the Spartacists. Fearing Catholic restorationism, they decided that the best outcome to the crisis was a Soviet invasion to crush the Polish working class. When this didn't materialise they were more than ready to applaud the bloody Jaruzelski coup and the clampdown on the Polish workers' organisations that came with it. They argued—

If the present crackdown restores something like the tenuous social equilibrium which existed in Poland before the Gdansk strikes last August, a tacit understanding that if the people left the government alone, the government would leave the people alone—conditions will be opened again for the crystallisation of a Leninist-Trotskyist party.

What a confession of bankruptcy. Stalinist "social equilibrium" is preferred by the Spartacists to a political revolutionary crisis, as the best conditions for building a party.

They are a Stalinophilic *right*-sectarian cult. They have reproduced in a bizarre parody Pablo's Stalinophile positions of 1949-51, a living proof that they *never* understood the roots of "Pabloism" and of the degeneration of the Fourth International.

Infantile Leftism

Like a sect in the tradition of Bordiga—the classic exponent of infantile leftism during the Comintern—they have in living situations of struggle rejected transitional demands such as *nationalisation under workers' control* in favour of calls to "seize and sell" bankrupt firms. In Chrysler they argued that the sale of stocks and plant should be shared out as redundancy pay. The alibi offered for this unheard of reactionary petit-bourgeois utopia was the backwardness of the American workers! The Spartacists are totally incapable of developing action programmes and tactics that concretely relate in a transitional manner to the needs of the struggle in the present period.

However, they occasionally seize upon and fetishize one tactic to beat the detested rivals over the head. Under the apparently innocuous (and for communists, banal) slogan "Picket lines don't mean cross" they turned the picket-line into a principle. Thus they attack workers (or more probably members of the groups they wish to destroy) for "crossing picket lines" where the strikers were explicitly only picketing supplies or where the picket is aimed at a different section of the workforce. Their venom against such "scabs" and their posing as defenders of picket lines rings hollow given their systematic abstentionism from most workers' struggles and their restriction of their "activities" to so-called exemplary cases (i.e. situations where they can directly attack rival groups). Thus, their class struggle activity turns out, on inspection, to be merely a sub-category of their demolition job aimed at ostensibly Trotskyist organisations.

They chronically refuse the united front tactic where it is made necessary by the struggles of the class and of the oppressed. In practice they prefer to

issue clownish ultimatums to rival groupings to join their demonstrations and pickets. They reject all applications and extensions of the united front, notably the method of critical electoral support of reformist workers' parties in which the mass of workers have illusions. Instead they pose the ultimatum of *programmatic agreements* as a precondition for calling on workers to stand with the mass party of the working class against the bourgeoisie!

They reject work, aimed at breaking collaboration with the bourgeoisie, within proletarian organisations involved in a Popular Front. They reject the Revolutionary Comintern's transitional tactic of the Workers' Government which they treat as a pseudonym for the proletarian dictatorship. They destroy the character of Trotsky's "Labor Party" slogan, presenting it as an ultimatum ("Dump the Bureaucrats!") and using it as a pseudonym for the revolutionary party.

In all these cases sectarian intransigence covers gross opportunist appetites. Thus whilst they refused critical support to Labour in 1979 and 1982 in Britain, they found Benn to be on the correct side of a "class struggle line" on the question of Soviet defencism! All this represents a complete break from the Transitional Programme, and the heritage of the Comintern and Trotsky's International Left Opposition on which it was founded.

The sections of the Spartacists internationally are little more than branches of the Spartacist League/USA. It is a sect dead for revolution which is incapable of furthering the fight for a new International.

Sadly it remains capable of demagogically rallying young activists to the side of the Stalinist bureaucracies under the guise of defending the post-capitalist societies, but at the expense of the fight for political revolution. Many in their ranks remain subjectively revolutionary despite their organisation's politics of capitulation. Thus they remain a *centrist* organisation. We fight to politically defeat them in a principled manner that can hope to win their best elements to unfalsified Trotskyism.

The Chauvinism of the Spartacist League Paraded in the USA

In spring of 1977 a far-left group in New York, the *League for a Revolutionary Party* (LRP) published a report in *Socialist Voice* of a public address by James Robertson, founder and leader of the Spartacists, and condemned it for its vulgar chauvinism as a stain on the name of Trotskyism. The Spartacist League responded to the LRP on Sep. 16 in *Workers Vanguard* with the contemptuous waiting—

If you believe what you read about the Spartacist League in *Socialist Voice*, you'll love the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. (This refers to an ultra-reactionary anti-semitic tract produced by the Czarist secret police.)

Subsequently, however, the truth of the LRP's charges against Robertson emerged when a taped version of his speech was published in a *Communist Cadre* pamphlet. They defended the LRP despite the radically different positions each group adopt towards the Spartacists on their attitudes to the Stalinist states. What the LRP charged in their paper was fully confirmed as to facts in "What the Spartacist League Really Stands For", (*Communist Cadre*, NY, 1978)

The speech by Robertson was outrageous in its arrogant metropolitan derision towards the peoples and workers of a whole series of countries and towards blacks in the US. The Irish Workers Group does not share the politics of either the LRP or Communist Cadre, but their publication of Robertson's speech was a principled action of service to all who oppose national chauvinism passing itself off as Trotskyism. Any reader of the speech must agree with Communist Cadre's description of it as an—

"unrelieved and uninterrupted string of comments that can only be described as national chauvinist and sexist in the extreme. What can one say of a man who claims to be a revolutionary

THE FOLLOWING QUOTATION from Robertson's speech reveals an opportunist US-centred view of Trotskyism which is fundamentally false. As the *Death Agony of the Fourth International* demonstrates, the US section fully shares responsibility for the political degeneration of the FI between 1948 and 1953, which left the FI dead for revolution, a role which the US Trotskyists reshadowed by their own adaptation to US imperialism during the war. [Dismissing the Trotskyists in China, Poland, USSR, France, Britain etc. in the '30s and '40s, Robertson goes on to say:]

Only in the United States, however bad the experience was in the thirties here, was there a continuous Leninist-Trotskyist tradition embodied organizationally and as a cadre. And, however critically we take a look at the history of the American section, it's the only one that received all the blows, had to make all the political concessions, had to deal with all the questions throughout the whole period. And we're not even speaking of the comrades in Germany and Italy

and who publicly refers to the Albanian peasants as "goatfuckers"? Who complains of the poor showing made by an SL candidate to student office even though "we ran a very pretty girl"? Who claims to be a champion of the exploited and oppressed and yet characterizes the gastarbeiters ("guest workers") from southern Europe as incapable of anything except "screaming for the popular front"? Who claims that Jewish merchants in the black ghettos charge higher prices because they are "being ripped off by all the black kids"? And what can one say of the SL membership who did not sit through this shameless performance in embarrassed silence, but who roared their approval at every turn, cheering Robertson on to the next indecency, to the next slap at the oppressed. (p.3)..."

"But nowhere—not even in the lengthy statements of WY defending such pro-imperialist politics [reference is to Lebanon and Ireland]—has the basic political premise of the SL attitude to the national question been so exposed as in Robertson's unguarded remarks of January 29, 1977. Here displayed for all to see is the SL's national chauvinism, its glorification of the superior culture of the imperialist (and especially English-speaking) nations and pro-imperialist settlers (such as the Israelis and Boers), its petty academic sectarian horror before the untutored violence and rage of the oppressed" (p.9)

The refusal of the Spartacists, in the face of testimony and protest from many quarters, to make any semblance of apology is even more instructive than the fact that their founder and leader could have made such a speech. But the roars of approval from the mainly Spartacist audience testify to one other aspect of this tendency's internal life. It is the life of a cult, and not the democratic centralism of a Leninist Trotskyist organisation.

where their dictators wiped them out. So, I don't suppose that's an issue that's going to grab an American audience very much. But in fact, in a critical way, because of the protection of a very powerful, imperialistically-based bourgeois democracy, in the last thirty years we have had the privilege, if we use it well—and otherwise we have it not at all—of the only continuous revolutionary Marxist experience on the face of the planet!"

From the transcript of speech by Robertson to his Spartacist League—

"We have had our comrades checking, and it is not yet assured, but we believe that Marx referred to the Albanians as "goat-fuckers". Is that True? [LOUD LAUGHTER]. But then he was prone to be ethnically pejorative of races. [LAUGHTER RISES.] And it must be pointed out that, to this day, and under the conditions of the fourth five year plan, the production of goats is still the principal... [HERE ROBERTSON IS CUT SHORT BY LAUGHING, WHISTLING AND APPLAUDING SLers]."

The Nature of Stalinism

The Spartacist School of Stalinophilia

[From *The Degenerated Revolution, Origins and Nature of the Stalinist States Workers Power/IWG 1982. pages 89-90 and 98-100.*]

Stalinism's 'Dual' Nature

[Following on from an account of the revision made in its programme by the Fourth International which re-classified Yugoslav Stalinism as progressive in 1951.]

This revision entailed redefining Stalinism as having a "dual nature". The bureaucratic social revolutions in the [E. European] Buffer Zone were seen as examples of the *counter-revolutionary* role of Stalinism. The progressive side of Stalinism is regarded as being the ability of some of the CPs, acting under the pressure of the masses, to break with the Kremlin and project a "revolutionary orientation". This was what the FI claimed had happened in Yugoslavia and later in China. It fell to Germain [Mandel], now obediently following Pablo's line, to give this revision theoretical expression in his "Ten Theses" on Stalinism:

"The contradictory nature of the Soviet bureaucracy is only partially reflected in the Stalinist parties. The dual nature of these parties is of a different social origin; it does not flow from the special role of a parasitic bureaucracy in a workers' state but from the dual function of these parties, which are working class because of their mass base in their own country as well as international instruments of the Soviet bureaucracy. (Towards a History of the Fourth International, NY, 1974, part 4, vol. 1, p. 17)

It was only being instruments of the Kremlin that defined them as Stalinist. Having a mass base could supposedly, under certain conditions, serve to negate this Stalinism. Thus:

The Yugoslav and Chinese examples have demonstrated that, placed in certain exceptional conditions, entire Communist parties can modify their political line and lead the struggle of the masses up to the conquest of power, while passing beyond the objectives of the Kremlin. Under such conditions these parties cease being Stalinist parties in the classical sense of the word. (ibid p.8)

That is, they became centrist parties capable of being made to carry out the revolutionary programme.

We reject the view that Stalinist parties are defined as such exclusively by virtue of their relationship to the Kremlin. This forms only one important constituent part of a Stalinist Party's programme and overall nature. Further we reject the notion that Stalinism has a dual nature and that it can be pushed in a revolutionary direction without first breaking up and being replaced by a revolutionary party.

Against this notion of Stalinism as possessing both a progressive and counter-revolutionary side, each weighing equally in the scales and separated in time and space, we assert the Trotskyist

conception of Stalinism as predominantly *counter-revolutionary* but with contradictory characteristics. We recognise this contradiction as an intensely dialectical one; that is, that Stalinism is capable of achieving (in exceptional circumstances) results which taken in isolation are progressive (the liquidation of capitalism). But Stalinism achieves these results for a counter-revolutionary strategy. We recognise that the "progressive part" is permeated and dominated by the counter-revolutionary whole. By dissolving this dialectical understanding of Stalinism into a pair of formally opposed and separable elements—progressive and reactionary—the FI after 1951 opened the way to a liquidation of the revolutionary programme in favour of an orientation which sought to pressure the national Communist Parties into taking the progressive path—through "de-entryism".

Finally the FI's revisionism on the question of Stalinism cannot be fully understood without reference to the positions taken on the FI's other major concern of the period—the continuing instability of imperialism. Up to 1948 this instability was understood in terms of chronic economic stagnation. After 1948 this instability came to be expressed, according to the FI, more and more in terms of preparations for a Third World War against the USSR and Eastern Europe.

The errors on Stalinism and Eastern Europe and on the prospects for imperialism came together in the 1951 Congress resolutions on "Orientation and Perspectives". These argued that a new world war was imminent, that the balance of forces was weighed against imperialism in favour of the workers' states, and that the newly discovered potentially progressive character of Stalinism everywhere would mean that the new war would take the form of an *international civil war*. The end result would be a series of revolutions at least as healthy and progressive as the Yugoslav one.

Vern-Ryan Tendency Foreshadows Spartacists

An opposition that purported to defend Trotskyism against Pablo's revisionism on the question was the Vern/Ryan tendency inside the SWP(US) 1950-53. This tendency argued that the FI had been wrong to delay for so long in characterising Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia included, as workers' states. They argued that the only decisive criterion for the characterisation of the class nature of a state was which class's representatives controlled the repressive apparatus of the state machine. Thus in Eastern Europe the entry of the Red Army (the repressive apparatus of a workers' state) marked the establishment of *workers' states*—i.e. as early as 1944-45. They reasoned that—"*Here in this superstructure of society, is where the revolution of our time takes place*" (*Documents of the Vern-Ryan Tendency*,

Communist Publishers, p.13). Stalinism is rooted in the working class—therefore, supposedly, the Stalinists in power always equal a distorted form of workers' power. Supposedly, too, Stalinism *could not* possibly rest on capitalist property relations, or prop up a capitalist state, even for a limited period, because it itself rests on the post-capitalist property relations.

These undialectical positions of the Vern/Ryan tendency which failed to recognise the contradictory nature of Stalinism, foreshadowed many of the errors of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) on the Russian question. Their position can be defined as Stalinophile.

It rests in the first place on an incorrect analogy with the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. Because the Bolsheviks in state power presided over private property in whole sections of the economy the Vern/Ryan tendency disregarded economic criteria altogether. They equated a healthy revolution, in which the capitalist state was decisively smashed by the direct action of the masses led by a revolutionary party and a new type of state established (1917), with the Stalinist led bureaucratic overturns of capitalism and the establishment of degenerate workers' states (1944). The same criterion was applied to two distinct historical phenomena. This was done because the Vern/Ryan tendency regarded the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy as only quantitatively different from the early Bolshevik state functionaries.

They define the bureaucracy solely as part of the working class, ignoring their nature as a distinct and ruling caste within Soviet society, based on the working class. They deny the predominantly counter-revolutionary nature of the bureaucracy. They deny the reality of Stalinism in Eastern Europe after the war. They ignore the reality that Stalinism did defend capitalist property relations for a period and that it did hand back countries it controlled, like Finland and Austria to the imperialists rather than abolish capitalism in them. This tendency's one-sided analysis of Stalinism grants to the Soviet bureaucracy a revolutionary dynamic it does not possess.

The criterion for establishing whether a degenerate workers' state exists is not, in the first place dependent upon whether the Stalinists have secured political power. As we have shown [preceding chapters of the book], this is a precondition for the creation of a degenerate workers' state. But it does not follow that fulfillment of this condition will inevitably lead to the establishment of planned property relations. This fact was proved beyond doubt by Austria, Finland and Vietnam (in 1945).

In the period 1948 to 1953 there was no revolutionary opposition to Pablo's revisionist positions on Stalinism. The FI split into the the International Committee (IC) and the International Secretariat (IS). The American SWP, the British Healy group and the French PCI, all of which joined the IC, repeatedly expressed their support for the FI's positions, up to and including the 1951 Congress documents on Yugoslavia.

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The Spartacist School of Stalinophilia

The Cuban Revolution created a new basis for agreement between the two principal camps of world 'Trotskyism'. It enabled Joseph Hansen and the SWP(US) and Ernest Mandel and the International Secretariat to reunite around similar positions on Cuba, that stemmed from their shared erroneous assessment of the Yugoslav revolution in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The SWP's positions on Cuba did not, however, go unchallenged within that organisation.

During the latter half of 1960 a minority tendency within the SWP(US) led by Mage, Wohlforth and Robertson, developed an alternative position to the SWP majority on the Cuban revolution. This led, in 1961, to the formation of the Revolutionary Tendency (RT), later to become the international Spartacist tendency (iSt—sic). Wohlforth was quickly to abandon the positions he helped to develop within the opposition and, in alliance with Healy, was to side with the SWP majority in the bureaucratic expulsion of the RT.

The initial positions were further developed within the iSt and have by implication rather than through theoretical elaboration, been extended to cover Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, China etc. (Indeed it is astonishing that over twenty years later barely a few lines have been written by the iSt on the Eastern European overturns). Motivated initially by a desire to avoid the chronic opportunism and liquidationism of the Hansen majority, the RT/iSt proceeded to make a series of major revisions of the Marxist theory of the state, which in their implications for the Marxist programme are no less erroneous and dangerous than those made by either Hansen or Wohlforth.

The core of the iSt's error lies in the characterisation of the nature of the state that existed in Cuba between January 1959 and late 1960. For them the government which controlled Cuba was "*an inherently transitory and fundamentally unstable phenomenon—a petty bourgeois government which was not committed to the defense of either bourgeois private property or to the collectivist property forms of proletarian class rule*" (WV 102). The government came to power in a situation where "*a capitalist state namely armed bodies of men dedicated to defending a particular property form, did not exist in the Marxist sense*". (*ibid*) The armed force on which this state rested was led by commanders who had their "*previous direct connections with oppositional liberal elements broken and had become episodically autonomous from their class ... the Cuban bourgeoisie*" (*Cuba and Marxist Theory, SL pamphlet*).

Thus despite the attempts to distance themselves from the original Mage/Wohlforth position of a "transitional state" with no defined class character—a position defined as "indefensible" in *Cuba and Marxist Theory*, this is nevertheless the characterisation the iSt itself used. *Cuba and Marxist Theory* declares: "*at no point was there a classless 'transitional' state in Cuba*", there was "*a petit-bourgeois government—not a class neutral one*". The use of the term "petit-bourgeois

government" does not get round this problem. Does this mean we have a petit-bourgeois state, based on a petit-bourgeois mode of production? The iSt recoils from this further revision of Marxism by remaining silent on this interesting new state form. Instead it prefers to define this state negatively, as one which neither defends bourgeois private property nor proletarian property forms.

Either this is a "class neutral" state, or the iSt is trying to breed a unicorn. Such a position directly overthrows the Marxist analysis of the state as elaborated from the Communist Manifesto onwards, that the state is a machine for maintaining the rule of one class over others. It is an organ of class rule which defends, even in its bonapartist form, *one* set of property forms. A state which defends neither capitalist nor proletarian property forms is therefore a classless state, a state which is no longer an organ of class rule, and a contradiction of the Marxist theory of the state!

Note further how the iSt defines the state as "*armed bodies of men dedicated to defending a particular property form*" [our emphasis]. This is an idealist notion of the relationship between property relations and the state machine. We judge the class nature of a state by its *actions*, not by the "dedication" of the individuals who make up its apparatus. This revision is essential for the iSt in giving a theoretical gloss to their notion of a "petit-bourgeois government", in which the property relations the state chooses to defend at any given time depends upon indecision in the minds of those in political power.

This fundamentally false analysis has been extended to Nicaragua, where we are expected to believe that [in 1982] a government that has been in existence since the summer of 1979, presiding over an economy overwhelmingly in the hands of private capital, does not defend capitalism. It is, rather, not yet decisively "committed" to either capitalism or to proletarian property forms!

Such an analysis of the Cuban events is unable to explain the class character of the popular front which came to power [under Castro] in January 1959, which the iSt assures us was not capitalist. It ignores the pro-capitalist, bourgeois movement of the [Castroite] July 26th Movement (J26M). When this aspect was dominant (i.e. during the popular front) the J26M crushed all attempts by the workers and peasants to go beyond the bourgeois limits set by the Castro leadership. Further, this analysis sows illusions in the petit-bourgeois leadership of the Rebel Army, declaring them to be somehow committed to no class interests, implying that the Army was somehow "neutral" between workers and peasants on the one hand and the capitalists and landowners on the other. It therefore cannot explain the struggle—in the form of dual power which existed between the bourgeoisie plus its supporters in the army on the one side and the petit-bourgeois leadership on the other side around Castro representing, in however distorted a form, the demands and pressure of the aroused workers and peasant masses. The programmatic conclusions of such analysis are necessarily *vague*. Because the Spartacists could not perceive the dual power situation, they had no programme for *resolving* it.

The basis on which Cuba is characterised as a "deformed workers' state" by the iSt is also wrong: "*Cuba became a deformed workers' state with the pervasive nationalisations in the Summer and Fall of 1960*". The equation put forward here: "Nationalisations=deformed workers' state" is completely false. The monopoly of foreign trade, and most vitally the introduction of planning on the basis of the suppression of the law of value, as well as nationalisations, are the features which, taken together, define an economy as post-capitalist.

Further, this position implies that a "petit-bourgeois government" can overturn capitalism and construct a "deformed" workers' state merely through massive nationalisations. On this basis, no real distinction can be made between Cuba and other "petit-bourgeois governments" which have followed a similar course, such as Algeria, Egypt, Burma, etc. —except on the basis of the percentage of the economy nationalised. Were all of these capitalist states "deformed workers' states in the process of formation?" By answering "No", the Spartacists are forced to contradict their own methodology.

The Spartacists also do not recognise in any form the essential role played by Stalinism in the Cuban Revolution. They do not recognise the proto-Stalinist wing of the pre-1959 J26M. They do not recognise the alliance of Castro with the Cuban Stalinists from November 1959. They do not recognise Castro's reliance on the bureaucratic apparatus of the PSP (the Cuban Stalinists) and the essential assimilation of Castroism to Stalinism, complete by the onset of planning in 1962, during the period of the bureaucratic workers' government. Nor do they recognise that such a process would have been impossible without the economic and military support of the Kremlin. Consequently they assign to the petit-bourgeoisie the ability to form a "deformed" workers' state—a revision of Marxism with regard to the fundamental characteristics of this class.

The Spartacists Capitulate to Stalinism

The fragmentary references of the iSt to the formation of "deformed" workers' states in Eastern Europe imply the existence of similar periods of "classless states" or "workers states in the process of formation". From the entry of the Red Army, the class nature of the state is indeterminate. They only flaw which the iSt sees in the Vern-Ryan tendency's equation of entry of Red Army with formation of "deformed workers' state" is that in some cases the Soviet forces withdraw—e.g. in Austria, leaving behind a capitalist state. But the preferred term "workers' state in the process of formation" is a designation of no use. It can only be used *after* the event, as a description. This is a position which, as in Cuba, will not define the class character of the state, its government, or what property forms its army defends at each stage, and thus fails to provide any coherent revolutionary programme during the period of dual power, or the period of an anti-capitalist bureaucratic workers' government.

Not only a revisionist position on the state emerges from this analysis. In echoing the positions of the Vern-Ryan tendency, the iSt have made a fundamental revision of the Trotskyist

understanding of Stalinism. For the iSt, Stalinism has a "dual character" it has a "bad", counter-revolutionary side, and a "good", progressive one. Its bad side involves it in crushing workers' democracy, expropriating the proletariat from political power; its good side is that it can overturn capitalism, and the two weigh equally in the balance.

Afghanistan and Poland

This position is evidenced in the increasingly Stalinophile programme of the iSt, particularly with regard to Afghanistan and Poland. In these countries, the "dual" character of Stalinism is reflected in the supposed *ability* of the Stalinists to act as "*liberators in a social as well as national sense*" in particular countries, and in its *inability* to carry through the proletarian revolution on a world scale (*Whose Poland?*, in *Spartacist Britain* no.32). Both Mandel (in his "Ten Theses", 1951) and the Vern-Ryan Tendency (in their description of Stalinism as *centrist*) articulated a similar position. This position is absolutely false. It has nothing in common with genuine Trotskyism.

Stalinism does not have two competing aspects, one of which at any one time predominates over another. Rather, it has a *contradictory* character because its privileged caste existence in the USSR is based on the post-capitalist property forms established by the October Revolution. To defend these property forms, the very basis of this caste's existence, the Stalinist bureaucracy is sometimes forced to carry through measures which, if taken in isolation from the way they are carried out and the effects they have on the international class struggle, would be considered progressive. But these measures are never carried through in isolation, they are always carried through in a counter-revolutionary manner, and always involve the political expropriation of the working class in the country concerned. Thus for us, the Stalinist bureaucracies have a contradictory character but form a predominantly counter-revolutionary whole. We do not grant to this *caste* the potential for fulfilling the mission of the *proletariat*—genuine proletarian revolutions are the pre-requisite for building world socialism.

The retreat from the revolutionary programme which the Spartacist position involves can be accurately gauged from the answers that they have offered to the Afghan and Polish masses.

In Afghanistan the iSt reject the perspective of Permanent Revolution for that country, because of its backwardness. They make a false analogy between the healthy Soviet workers' state of the early 1920s that assimilated certain backward Asian countries, and the counter-revolutionary international designs of the bonapartist clique in the Kremlin. Events in Afghanistan are viewed not from the standpoint of international class struggle (which would link the struggle of progressive Afghans with that of their fellow Afghan workers resident in Iran, Pakistan etc. as part of a struggle for a Socialist Federation of South-West Asia), but from the abstract standpoint of 'backwardness' versus 'progress' "*now led by Russian tanks*" (*Spartacist*, Winter 1979/80). The Spartacists call on the Bureaucracy to extend the social gains of the

October revolution. They "*Hail the Red [sic] Army*" as agent of this process. That is, behind the radical verbiage, they call for, as part of *their own* programme, the establishment of a degenerate workers' state. This is *not* a tactical united front, it is an abandonment of an independent programme. This reliance on the Soviet bureaucrats as second best given the weakness of the Afghan working class, leads inexorably to a *strategic bloc* with Stalinism.

On the events in Poland 1980-1981, the iSt have gone from simple hostility to the Polish workers' movement right up to a bloc with the Stalinists to help crush that movement. They started their analysis of Poland *not* from the revolutionary possibilities that existed, but from a supposed threat posed by the Polish workers' action to the property relations in Poland and the USSR. Their excuse for this stance was their exaggerated view of the immediacy of the Catholic church's restorationist intentions.

After trying to square the circle—giving limited support to the misled Polish workers, and opposing a Russian invasion (by "hissing at tanks" as *Workers Vanguard* advised), by late 1981 the iSt gave up and decided that Solidarnosc was counter-revolutionary to the core, and should be crushed, by Kremlin tanks if necessary:

"Solidarity's counter-revolutionary course must be stopped! If the Kremlin Stalinists, in their necessarily brutal, stupid way, intervene militarily to stop it, we will support this. And we take responsibility in advance for this; whatever the idiocies and atrocities they will commit, we do not flinch from defending the crushing of Solidarity's counter-revolution. (Spartacist Britain, no.32)

When the Jaruzelski variant on their advice was launched on December 13th 1981, when Polish tanks moved to crush the 10 million strong movement of Polish workers, the Spartacists were quick to offer their support. They warned the Polish workers against any resistance, and cynically described the crackdown as a "cold shower" for the Polish proletariat. Upset by over a year of class struggle, these miserable pedants, who can only imagine winning the working class to their cruel caricature of Trotskyism in the sterile atmosphere of the propagandists' schoolroom (separate from the actual struggles of workers), called for a return to Gierek's 1970 style of government: "*If the present crackdown restores something like the tenuous social equilibrium which existed in Poland before the Gdansk strikes last August, a tacit understanding that if the people left the government alone, the government would leave the people alone—conditions will be opened again for the crystallisation of a Leninist-Trotskyist party*" (*Power Bid Spiked*, in *Workers Vanguard* No. 295).

The iSt have blood on their hands. The "good" side of Stalinism's "dual nature", the side that the iSt call on revolutionaries to support, has become its willingness and ability to crush the independent activity of the working class. Programmatic confusion on Cuba in 1960 has become metamorphosed into Stalinophile clarity in 1982. •

SPARTACISTS OPPOSE WORKERS' SOLIDARITY AGAINST THE BEIJING BUTCHERS

A FAVOURITE TERM of abuse in the Spartacist lexicon is to refer to the "crazed" positions of their rivals. Rarely has the word been so apt to describe the polemic of a centrist group than the *crazed* language of the Spartacists' *Workers Hammer* when it headlined page 5 of its November 1989 issue:—"Irish Workers Group calls on Pope to expel Chinese Ambassador". The rant which followed is a chemically, if not comically, pure example of misrepresentation, distortion and amalgam ending up with an outrageous lie for its headline!

The relevant passage in the British Spartacists' "polemic" in November reads—

On 6 June, the Irish Workers Group ... issued a grotesque statement headed: "Solidarity against the Beijing butchers! Expel the Chinese ambassador now!" This is a de facto call for rupturing diplomatic relations, a measure generally undertaken on the eve of war. This revolting appeal to the clerical-bourgeois Irish state—with its constitutional allegiance to the pope—to isolate the Chinese deformed workers' state is nothing but a social chauvinist pledge of alliance with the bourgeoisie against a workers' state.

The call by the IWG for the the expulsion of the Chinese Ambassador was politically wrong—a mistake on the part of the IWG which was not repeated after the day of distribution of the leaflet in question at a demonstration at Dublin's Chinese embassy. In fact the mistake was openly admitted face to face to a leader of the British Spartacists at a meeting in Dublin before they wrote their diatribe! Any reading of the IWG leaflet in question leaves no doubt whatever about the IWG's complete commitment to *working class independence* in the solidarity struggle. Anyone with the slightest acquaintance with the IWG's politics over 15 years will also know that we maintain an implacable class hostility to the Irish bourgeoisie and its clerical allies!

It would be wrong to join with the bourgeoisie in any attack on the diplomatic apparatus of the Stalinists. That does not mean for a moment that it would be wrong for the working class to independently act, as a class, in solidarity with Chinese workers, *against* either the diplomatic or economic interests of the Stalinists when they are murdering workers in struggle. This is where we differ radically with the Spartacist fellow-travellers of Jaruzelski and Deng Xiao Ping.

They opposed all direct action by workers to put pressure on the Beijing *butchers*.—a description of the Stalinists which obviously pains *Workers Hammer* as 'grotesque'. By contrast, we fully support the action of Australian dockers in besieging the Chinese embassy and in blocking trade with China during the brutal martial law.

The IWG leaflet in no way implied an alliance with the bourgeoisie against a workers' state. The whole line of the leaflet is *against* the hypocrisy of imperialist "concern" about the Peking massacre. The whole line is for *independent* working class action in solidarity with the workers and students of China. The slogan for action against Peking's diplomats, was one of 10 action-slogans which we put forward. All were posed as tasks for an independent *workers'* campaign.

The demand is posed in these terms—"force the Irish state to expel the Chinese ambassador immediately". Note that the Irish state would have to have been *forced* to take such action. There was no question of adapting to bourgeois pressure for action against China, for there was none! Our leaflet stated: "We do not for a single moment make any common cause with the hypocritical outrage of the White House, Thatcher and their clients throughout the capitalist world, including Dáil Eireann who boast the superiority of their 'democracy'" etc. At the time of the Beijing massacre, the express interest of capitalist and imperialist states was to maintain the new economic relationship with the Chinese bureaucracy. This clearly dominated over any pretended concern for the Chinese masses.

There was not the slightest possibility that such action would be taken by the Irish bourgeoisie. Our wrong demand did not, therefore undermine our call for independent workers' action in solidarity with the Beijing masses mobilising against Stalinism.

It is the latter that the Spartacists really object to. Oblivious to the fact that imperialism was not attacking China, either militarily or economically, they condemn our call for workers' sanctions against the Chinese bureaucracy as "nothing more than backhanded support for imperialist economic blackmail, undermining the collectivist foundations of the Chinese deformed workers state and punishing the Chinese workers to boot".

The Spartacists also reject the use of workers' sanctions against the Apartheid state in periods of mass mobilisation in S.Africa! That, too, would only "punish" the workers economically! So do many strikes undertaken by workers themselves! The South African workers and, we are confident, the vanguard of the Chinese workers, appreciate the necessity for the active international solidarity of workers' embargoes on trade with their oppressors; especially when they themselves are sacrificing their lives in the offensive against these oppressors.

Once more the defence of the workers' state, for the Spartacists, becomes nothing more than the defence of the Stalinist bureaucracy. The independent mobilisation of the proletariat worldwide in solidarity with the anti-Stalinist uprising in Beijing

takes second place to defending the immediate economic interests of the Bureaucracy!

The Spartacists' hysteria in defence of the diplomatic apparatus of Stalinism, even when it is not under attack from imperialism, when it is used to lie about the massacre in Beijing, ties in with their diplomatic advocacy on behalf of the Cambodian bureaucracy of Heng Samrin for whom they demanded a seat in the imperialist Thieves' Kitchen of the United Nations! (Trotsky explicitly rejected any such involvement by a workers' state.)

The Chinese Ambassador and... the Pope?

As for the role of the Pope in the whole question, it is conjured up simply as a form of abuse against the IWG. To dress up their fantasy of an IWG bloc with the Irish bourgeoisie, they invented for the Irish state a "constitutional allegiance to the Pope" which in fact has never existed. The amalgam of the IWG, Haughey and the Pope against the Chinese ambassador is a deliberate lie and smear in every respect. The crazed tone of their absurd headline reflects their metropolitan phobia towards religion and nationalism in the backward countries—a phobia which, as we have seen, repeatedly topples over into pro-imperialist chauvinism.

Mimicking the Spartacists?

It is appropriate to here to nail another lie in the same diatribe in *Workers Hammer*. Their first sentence reads—

Some months ago, mimicking our founding of the International Communist League, Workers Power and its confederates set up the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) to address the "crisis of Stalinism".

In fact the LRCI founding conference had been scheduled for nearly two years preceding the announcement of the Spartacists' change of name. That period had been one of intense preparation of the *Trotskyist Manifesto* as the basis for our new League. Our change from *Movement* to *League* marked a major transformation from a co-operating series of groups from different countries and traditions into a united democratic-centralist and genuinely *international* organisation. A change of name was entirely justified to mark this qualitative leap.

The Spartacists' change of name, by contrast, had no political rhyme or reason. In the middle of the international Trotskyist gathering of the *Lutte Ouvrière Fête* in Paris the banner with the old name was hauled down and the new one hauled up. In none of the many leaflets they gave out was there any political explanation offered to the many activists from around the world! There appears to be no reason other than the impatience of the Spartacists at marking the passage of 25 years since their American founders set out to "destroy" all rival organisations claiming to be revolutionary.

The only "destruction" in which they are likely to succeed is their own political collapse as their craven alliance with Stalinism comes more and more into conflict with the revolutionary struggle of the working class against the Bureaucracy!

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The Spartacists: A Poisoned Well

A reply to slanders by the
"International Communist League"
formerly "international Spartacist tendency" /

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*As events in the East negate all their predictions and expose their own Stalinophilia, the Spartacists step up their attack on the one tendency which really represents a healthy Trotskyist alternative.
Twisting all the facts into a criminal lie, they smear our principled solidarity with the new workers' movements in the USSR as collusion with fascism!*
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INTRODUCTION

IN FEBRUARY 1990 the Irish Workers Group published a pamphlet on the 'Spartacists', a far-left political group spuriously claiming to be the living continuation of Leninism,– Trotskyism and internationalism. Our pamphlet showed how they are, rather, a U.S.-centred sect whose politics embody profound adaptations to *Stalinism*, of a kind totally alien to Trotsky—an exaggerated version of the very political errors which destroyed Trotsky's world party within ten years of his assassination by Stalin in 1940. (*The Politics of the Spartacists*, IWG, Dublin, Feb. 1990.)

That pamphlet was occasioned by attacks on the Irish Workers Group in the paper of the declining Spartacist League in Britain who were targeting Trinity College Dublin for recruits in 1989-90. This latest pamphlet is unfortunately necessary in response to renewed attacks.

Internationally, among all the currents which claim their origins in Trotsky's struggle against Stalinism, the Spartacists are a by-word for the most deliberate use of lies and smears against rivals. In Ireland, where they are not known, it is unfortunately necessary, therefore, to reply to their recent slanders in some detail. Hence this pamphlet.

Polemic versus Slander

The 150 years of socialist struggle since the industrial revolution has always been marked by intense debate and polemic among rival currents

concerned to win political activists to their programmes. The revolutionary tradition of Lenin and Trotsky—in which both IWG and the Spartacists claim to stand—has a special commitment, however, to *political honesty* in all such polemical and ideological conflicts.

Trotsky's struggle against Stalinism was quintessentially a struggle against a monstrous lie-machine of unparalleled proportions. The Kremlin cloaked in 'socialist' rhetoric the policies of a brutal bureaucracy which crushed all workers' democracy in the USSR and sold out workers' revolution in China, Germany, France, Spain in the '20s and '30s.

Trotskyism fundamentally rejects methods of political argument which rely on slander, *amalgam* of half truths, imputing guilt by association to rivals etc. There is no room for such methods in polemic, however sharp it may be. To tolerate such methods is to court disaster, for sadly, groups which use such methods *can succeed* in destroying healthy attempts to recreate a genuine revolutionary communist movement.

This brief pamphlet focuses on two major issues which reveal this difference in method. The first arose from the student-led struggle for the right to abortion information last year. The second concerns the most momentous political events since 1945—the collapse of the "communist" world and the question of how socialists in the west should relate to the new movements of opposition to Stalinism in the Eastern Bloc countries.

The IWG and the Abortion Information Campaign

The record of the Spartacists in TCD

THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE/Britain arrived in TCD last autumn in the midst of a struggle, led by TCD Students Union and the USI, to defend women's right to information on abortion. They involved themselves in the issue with the overriding aim of attacking the Irish Workers Group. They began a year-long campaign—internationally!—of smearing IWG with a blatant lie about our position on the abortion issue.

IWG addressed student meetings and demonstrations, and trade union meetings, arguing for an action programme for a united front of workers and students in a fighting campaign to win the right to abortion information. But, we argued, such a campaign would go nowhere unless it openly challenged the state with *political* demands. We argued that it was vital to take up immediately the fight not only to defy the law, not only to defend those victimised for doing so, but to *force the state* to repeal the 1861 Act and the 8th Constitutional Amendment which *criminalise* abortion information and abortion itself. Based on our involvement with this issue since 1975 we raised these as slogans which we believed could unite the disparate activists and groups in *developing* the existing action campaign action now and which could open up the road of struggle for positive abortion rights, an issue

on which only a tiny minority were yet prepared to fight.

In that struggle, as the IWG has always openly argued since its foundation, we fight for *free abortion on demand* as the only adequate solution. Short of an actual struggle for this goal we continue to argue in our propaganda why this demand must be taken up by workers, women, socialists and democrats as the only guarantee of women's control of their own lives.

What was the position of the Spartacists? Their organiser in TCD, opposed our attempt to have socialists take up the fight for such a united front. They even opposed our attempt to have the TCD Socialist Society issue a leaflet calling for a vote in defence of abortion information in the TCD referendum—a leaflet which outlined how the struggle should be developed *now* for decriminalisation, with the *perspective* of going on to fight for abortion on demand.

They counterposed a leaflet of their own which argued *no* tactics for the actual struggle, but arguing that the fight should be for nothing short of abortion on demand. Its only concrete advice was 'vote yes' in the referendum and build the 'revolutionary party'. It concluded with the incredible abstraction—"women's liberation through socialist revolution".

Implicit in their arguments is the cop-out position that in Ireland abortion rights *could never* be won this side of the *socialist revolution*, so why bother proposing tactics for the existing campaigns which are only scratching the surface? When challenged to participate in addressing student classes in the referendum campaign, this 'revolutionary' Spartacist did indeed cop out!

The Spartacists' British paper, stated more formally their sectarian and ultra-left position—*"None of these groups [IWG or SWM] raised the right to free abortion on demand. This should be the minimal starting point for revolutionaries!"* The real existing struggle wasn't advanced enough to be treated as a starting point for these revolutionaries to intervene in and fight for tactics that could develop it!

Our Record

IWG's October issue of *Class Struggle* carried a short agitational article arguing how the immediate struggle could actually be developed to smash the legal obstacles to abortion information. IWG held a public meeting at which we argued our full position in depth and how we *linked* the present struggle to the perspective of opening up a fight for abortion on demand.

Our November paper carried a more in-depth page on the issue in which we explained why *free abortion on demand* was necessary to guarantee women's control of their own lives—the kind of political argument we have been making consistently since the 1970s when *Magill* magazine listed the IWG as the *only* group in Ireland which openly campaigned for abortion on demand. That record was maintained when four of the main Irish left groups united in 1978 in the *Socialist Labour Party*, and *all* of them shied off the issue of abortion, with the exception of the IWG. We alone struggled to get the issue to the SLP conference and eventually we won a two-thirds majority of the 150 delegates to adopt a programme for *abortion on demand*. In fact, the IWG has constantly been attacked on the Irish left for trying to link immediate issues to a perspective of fighting for abortion on demand and the full needs of women.

But then, as now, we always rejected the ultra-left idea that the existing campaigns of disparate forces could be magically turned into a fight for this full programme by an ultimatum. We always argued for

tactics which would build a *bridge* from the immediate issue to the fight for the full programme.

The sectarian Spartacists fear to 'contaminate' themselves by getting involved with the *actual* struggles of workers, women and students with a tactical method which seeks to raise these partial beginnings to the level of the revolutionary programme.

It was a deliberate lie for the Spartacists, therefore, to claim that the IWG did not raise the right to free abortion on demand. Spartacists around the world were given the instruction to harangue members of the IWG's international group, the LRCI, with the accusation that *"your Irish comrades refused to call for abortion on demand"*.

And not for the first time. When we followed a similar method in the 1983 Constitutional Amendment campaign on abortion in Ireland, the Spartacists made the same charge against us in their British paper—of dropping our programme for abortion on demand! At the international far-left gathering in Paris in 1984 their Australian members were primed to harangue us with the same lie. Comically grasping at straw, they even claimed that James Connolly had supported the right to abortion 80 years ago! Sadly, Connolly could not even bring himself to defend the right to divorce.

In May 1990, at the same venue, the leading French Spartacist present intervened in an IWG public meeting—launching our new book on James Connolly—to make the highly relevant point that... *"you refused to call for abortion on demand in Ireland!"*

Why, one might ask, should the Spartacists go to such lengths to attack the groups of the LRCI (Workers power in Britain, the Irish Workers Group etc.)?. No such energy was directed against the larger, more influential Socialist Workers Movement in Ireland, or the Labour Party. The reason is that for over a decade the British Spartacists have seen the *Workers Power* group and its IWG co-thinkers as the most dangerous challengers to their claim to be *the* Bolsheviks and Trotskyists of our time. Consequently, they targeted *Workers Power* in Britain in the early 1980s with the aim of destroying this healthy revolutionary tendency because our political method contrasted so powerfully with the sectarianism, pro-Stalinism and ultra-left abstractions of the Spartacists.

An Unprincipled Method

How the Spartacists combat rival groups.

The Spartacists, internationally, have committed themselves to a sectarian policy to explicitly *destroy* all rival groups claiming to stand for the revolutionary communism of Trotsky. (See the historical background in the IWG pamphlet on the Spartacists, Dublin, Feb. 1990). This involves combining propaganda for their own abstract programme with campaigns of smearing rival groups with gross distortions of the truth and downright lies.

Typically, a well-calculated smear, however localised or limited in content, is promoted with long

abusive articles in their paper and turned into a slogan with which to harangue members of the rival group wherever they may be encountered across the globe! The method also involves disrupting public meetings of a targeted group—sometimes by a deliberate provocation, more often by abusive allegations totally unrelated to the subject of the meeting but calculated to destroy any atmosphere of honest debate. The first meeting they attended in TCD last year was given by the SWM on Eastern Europe. The Spartacists' contribution was to abuse the SWM because, allegedly,

five years before, individuals in their fraternal organisation in Britain had crossed a picket line!

Such a method ultimately leads to the use of physical force to intimidate rivals. There is a world of difference between setting out to *destroy* rival groups and aiming to *defeat* them *politically* in honest polemic which focuses on the actual political differences and not on lying caricatures.

Our Method

The IWG and our international organisation (LRCI) has nothing in common with the methods or outlook of the Spartacists. We emphasise at all times the open fight for a revolutionary action programme, through active involvement by our members in the living

struggles of workers, students, anti-imperialists, and *in that context* to conduct honest debate and polemic, however sharp, against other groups offering rival programmes. This, we believe, is the only way to *test out in practice* the rival claims.

It is the only way, we believe, that can ultimately bring together the best political activists to create the nucleus of the kind of party that is needed in the fight for socialism. It is a process which must lead to *political defeat* and eventual marginalisation of groups whose politics fail to connect the goal of socialism to the living struggles of the oppressed and exploited for their social emancipation.

How the Spartacists Excluded Themselves From LRCI Meetings in Britain

The decision by the Spartacists ten years ago to target *Workers Power* (and the IWG) for 'destruction' was renewed, in desperation, in the past two years. Not only did they completely fail in this sectarian project over 10 years, but *Workers Power* grew in numbers and in the strength of its politics and its international relations while the Spartacists in Britain declined sharply. Their 'offensive' did, however, backfire in one important incident which was the subject of renewed black propaganda against us last year in their attempts to recruit in Dublin.

In brief, they claim that they have been unfairly excluded from public meetings in Britain by *Workers Power*. The British Spartacist paper fumed over this question in December 1989 because they were refused entry to a major open meeting in London—the *Permanent Revolution Weekend*—at which several other groups debated under the auspices of *Workers Power*. Spartacists claim that our action gives the lie to the claim of the LRCI groups to stand for open democratic debate among all groups claiming to be Trotskyist. Again, what are the facts?

The Spartacists in Britain, in 1982, deliberately set out to disrupt a *Workers Power* public meeting to which they had been invited. As a result they were told that they would henceforth be banned from all public meetings of *Workers Power*, until such time as they apologised for their disruptive action. They refused.

For 8 years the Spartacists refused to apologise and continued to be excluded. In November 1989 *Workers Power* went so far as to tell them that they could attend the *Permanent Revolution* meetings if they would give a formal undertaking to respect the rulings of the chair at the meetings. They *refused* because they believed this would be an admission of their guilt in the 1982 provocation! Instead they stood outside this meeting in London (on the crisis of Stalinism) and harangued *Workers Power* members—*"your Irish comrades refused to call for abortion on demand"*!

Subsequent to imposing this ban, *Workers Power* became a member of the international LRCI. The conditions for lifting the ban in Britain were never met and in the other countries no cause was given to the LRCI sections to impose a similar ban. Thus, for example, the IWG invited the Spartacists to debate

German reunification—this took place in TCD in April 1990. And our comrades in Berlin undertook a similar debate with them. In every detail, therefore, the method of the LRCI groups has been open, honest and principled.

But what were the circumstances of the Spartacist provocation? *Workers Power* held a meeting on Nov. 13th 1982 in Birmingham to launch the book *The Degenerated Revolution—Origins and Nature of the Stalinist States*. The Spartacists accepted an invitation to have a speaker in the session on Cuba. They were assured their members could also speak from the floor in all other sessions. They raised no objections to any of the proposed arrangements. They asked to be allowed set up a bookstall in the meeting. They were told that as it was not a jointly organised meeting the only bookstall inside would be that of the organisers, *Workers Power*, but they would be free to sell their material out of hand even inside the meeting—a right that is often denied by organisers of open public meetings.

On the day of the meeting an organised group of them marched into the hall and set up a bookstall and then surrounded it with a defence guard, refusing all requests to remove it. The meeting was suspended while the Spartacists were given an ultimatum to leave or the (civilian) caretaker would be called to order them off the premises. They finally acceded to the caretaker's request but then set up a picket line outside the hall with prepared placards! Throughout the day they maintained that *Workers Power* had called the police to get rid of them! This was even put on some of the placards. They produced a leaflet and organised a meeting in a pub room nearby which they had booked in advance.

A member of the Spartacists at the time confirmed later to *Workers Power* the evident fact that the entire operation had been pre-planned and that even their international headquarters in the US was angry that they had been caught out in a failed provocation against *Workers Power*. For them there could be no question of admitting a mistake or apologising. It revealed that the Spartacists are, on occasion, prepared to breach workers' democracy and physically disrupt other groups' meetings for their own tactical purposes. That is a serious offence by the standards of Trotskyism.

They were prepared to systematically lie to defend their actions—claiming that the police of the bourgeois state had been called in. The Spartacists to this day maintain the lie. The decision to ban them was taken for these

reasons and will stand until they give an undertaking to abide, at Workers Power meetings, by the discipline of the organisers.

“Caught With Russian Fascists, Thatcher’s Scabs”!

The latest slander orchestrated against the LRCI by the Spartacists is rooted in major differences over the collapse of the so-called “communist” countries and the nature of the workers’ political revolution which is necessary in those states. Their smear headline reads—*“The Butchenko Affair: Anti-Sovietism Comes Home to Roost. Workers Power Caught with Russian Fascists, Thatcher’s Scabs”*. Before listing the facts which they have set out to falsify, it is useful to look at the political issues which the Spartacists are running from under cover of such poisonous slanders which cover page after page of their papers.

The IWG pamphlet *The Politics of the Spartacists* showed how they have distinguished themselves for 25 years internationally by a profound adaptation to the *Stalinist bureaucracy* which rules in all of the post-capitalist countries—USSR, China, E. Europe, Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea, N. Korea, and Cuba.

Hailing the Stalinist Army

They are the most *stalinophile* of all the currents claiming to be Trotskyist. In particular they are infamous for their ecstatic welcome of the Soviet Armed Forces when they marched into Afghanistan in 1979. “Hail the Red Army”, they proclaimed, as the Kremlin invaded with the sole aim, not of winning the progressive civil war being waged by left forces against the feudal landlords, but to try to quell instability in a major territory on its own borders. Afghanistan had been a ‘neutral’ buffer country under the rule of feudal kings with whom the Kremlin was happy to co-exist until popular movements began to oppose the feudal regime. Soon the Kremlin would prove its “progressive” role by trying to compromise with the reactionary mullahs at the expense of the peasantry, women and workers whose oppression had fuelled the civil war.

Crushing the Polish Workers

Then in 1981 the Spartacists decided that the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy in Poland had to be defended *against* the workers’ mass movement, *Solidarnosc*. They announced that if the Kremlin were to invade Poland to crush *Solidarnosc*, the Spartacists would support them! But Polish Stalinists found their own Bonaparte, General Jaruzelski, who imposed martial law and crushed the political and trade union freedoms which had been won by the strikes and demonstrations of 10 million workers under the banner of *Solidarnosc*.

To be sure, the leaders of *Solidarnosc* were either pro-capitalist or all too ready to compromise with the Stalinists and hold back the workers from overthrowing their oppressors. To be sure, the mass of Polish workers had real illusions in western ‘democracy’. After forty years denied any political freedom, with no party of their own, only the experience of concrete struggle could possibly teach workers that parliaments and the free market were no solution to their problems, that they needed to fight for a political revolution to bring the planned economy under the democratic rule of workers’ councils as the only way forward—to genuine socialism.

But because the Polish workers had not yet arrived at this Trotskyist understanding of their tasks, because they tolerated leaders who were openly pro-capitalist, their mass organisation had to be suppressed, according to the Spartacists—despite the fact that its actual *struggles* were overwhelmingly progressive in their demands. Hence their advance support for intervention by the Kremlin, hence their political bloc with General Jaruzelski. Hence their acceptance of Jaruzelski’s justification of martial law—the claim that *Solidarnosc* leaders were planning a coup-d’état to restore capitalism. In fact, when faced with Jaruzelski’s coup to suppress *Solidarnosc*, Walesa and the leadership even failed to use the one force and weapon over which they had real control against Jaruzelski—a general strike by their own mass movement!

The Spartacists even made the outrageous claim that the military dictatorship would create the breathing space for a true Trotskyist party to emerge among the workers. Rather than learn through their own struggle, the workers would be suppressed by the Stalinist security forces until they were ready to behave according to the programme of the Spartacists. The bitter fruit of this would-be alliance of the Spartacists with Jaruzelski was that for eight years the Polish workers were denied political freedom. Unable to openly organise, to wage the class struggle and draw its lessons, unable even to convene a democratic conference of *Solidarnosc* where they could call Walesa & Co. to account, the pro-capitalist elements Walesa and the Catholic hierarchy were able to use the name of *Solidarnosc* to create a bourgeois party *over the heads of the workers* which today is leading the path back to capitalism—with the full co-operation of Jaruzelski!

Progressive Stalinism?

As explained in our earlier pamphlet, the Spartacists rationalise their slavish cheer-leading of the Stalinists in Poland, Afghanistan etc. by claiming that in these cases Stalinism was putting forward its progressive side.

For, at the heart of their theory, they believe Stalinism has a ‘dual nature’, i.e. two natures at different times, sometimes progressive and sometimes reactionary, either of which can dominate in different circumstances—as adjudicated by the Spartacists! They try to justify this *idealist* fiction by a willful misreading

of a line in Trotsky's writings where he speaks of the dual *function* of Stalin—"The function ... of Stalin has a dual character" (Workers Hammer, July 1990, p.3). This does *not* say that Stalinism has a dual *nature*. The theoretical issue at stake here has profound political consequences.

Every social force has dual, even multiple, *functions*. The trade union bureaucracy, the Labour Party, etc. based on workers' organisations but pursuing a *pro-capitalist* programme and defending their own privileges, display dual *functions*. They are repeatedly compelled to partially defend working class interests while they remain, overall, wedded to the preservation of capitalism. The overall *nature* of such forces is to *oppose* working class revolution at whatever cost. They are, overall, *counter-revolutionary*. Limited actions of a progressive character, which they may be forced to carry out, are *always* subordinated to their *overall reactionary* strategy—defending their own existence as an agent for the bourgeoisie. In their *contradictory* existence, one side of the 'contradiction' predominates overall, the reactionary side of defending the bourgeois order and their own position within it.

Trotsky explained the contradictory nature of the Stalinist social caste which must preserve the post-capitalist planned economy for the sake of its own privileges, and yet, out of the same self-interest it cannot tolerate any restoration of workers' democracy. In the early 1930s he concluded that the Stalinist bureaucratic caste had become crystallised into a force *opposed* to proletarian revolution everywhere, incapable of any progressive *strategy*.

Stalin demonstrate this "progressive" role in Eastern Europe by handing back Eastern Austria to imperialism because it was agreed to supposedly "neutralise" it. Elsewhere, as in East Germany where he *preserved* the capitalist system for four years, his strategy was solely to protect his own national territory. He kept bourgeois popular front governments in power to persuade the West to agree to neutralise Eastern Europe as a buffer zone. But the US Marshall Plan and Cold War strategy sought to mobilise the very capitalist forces Stalin was preserving in the East European zone as an anti-Soviet force. His self-preservation forced him to expropriate the capitalist class and impose a bureaucratic planned economy. In doing so, however, the overriding precondition was that *the working class be denied all political control and freedom of organisation*. Thus the manner in which capitalism was abolished in East Europe was *counter-revolutionary*, utterly opposed to workers' revolution. The creation of planned economies was nevertheless a gain to be subsequently defended, but not a gain that in any way outweighed the oppression of the working class.

Of course this historical analysis based on Trotsky's method is intolerable to the Spartacists who tried to persuade Berlin workers in 1990 that Stalin's role in East Germany in 1945-50 had been *progressive*! Despite all the money and personnel the Spartacists poured into the GDR, it is no surprise that many of those recruited by their demagoguery have since abandoned their 'party' and in the April general elections their sectarian stand in the elections won them no more votes than the Beer Drinkers Union.

The New Workers' Movements

Only the living self-organised struggle of the mass of workers for their concrete needs can *ever* open up the road for socialist revolution, even if the workers begin that journey with the most pathetic illusions in western 'democracy' and the 'market'. The whole of Marxism hinges on this principle. But not for the Spartacists.

The method of Trotsky, Lenin, Engels and Marx was always to *unite in action* with the mass movements of workers wherever they *actually struggled* for a progressive demand, even though their outlook was still clouded with false and even poisonous illusions. This *united front* was the only basis on which the revolutionaries could have any means of persuading these workers and winning them to take up the revolutionary programme, step by step, and destroying their illusions through *actual experience*.

For the Spartacists, however, the abstract slogan of defence of the planned economy is a higher good than any such development of the class struggle. Instead of the united front with workers struggling against Stalinism, they took the side of the Stalinist dictator Jaruzelski in shooting down the workers 'in defence of the planned economy', only to be rewarded with the spectacle of Jaruzelski *combining* with Waleśa to *restore capitalism*! They sought a peaceful alliance with the Stalinists in the GDR to 'defend the planned economy' and condemned the masses' attacks on the Stasi offices—only to find that the Stalinists themselves refused to defend the planned economy! That is why their slogan of 'defence of the planned economy' remains *abstract* and sectarian.

They choose to defend it through the agency of Stalinists whose nature is fundamentally to prefer capitalist restoration to workers' revolution! The *only* way in which defence of the planned economy can ever be posed to the working class is as part of their own *political revolution* against Stalinism *and* the struggle against capitalist imperialism.

Solidarity Tasks

These positions led the Spartacists, last February in Dublin, to oppose the building of a campaign of solidarity with workers in struggle in the Eastern Bloc countries when this was raised in TCD at the Federation of College Socialist Societies. Predictably, they refused to support any form of solidarity with workers' movements where they could not be guaranteed in advance that such movements would have the correct political position of defending the planned economy.

By contrast the LRCI groups actively engage in solidarity campaigns with the new workers' movements—where these are genuinely involved in action for the defence of workers' concrete needs. We fully recognise the depth of illusions that most such movements have in the 'market' or in western 'democracy'. But rather than block with Stalinism against them, rather than cut ourselves off from the living struggle which they *must go through* in order to expose those illusions, we work to bring such workers into active contact with trade union militants and socialists in the west, to explain our experiences of

struggle against capitalism, to debate with them, to challenge their illusions.

Not to attempt such solidarity work is ultra-left sectarianism—or collusion with Stalinism—and actually surrenders the new movements to the pro-market propaganda of international agencies which are busy trying to buy over their new organisations.

“Caught With Russian Fascists”!

The LRCI's solidarity work on this front revealed just how real is this danger to the new workers' movements. A representative of Soviet workers—Yuri Butchenko—whom we brought to meet workers and socialists in Britain in June 1990, succumbed after 10 days to the bribes of right-wing agencies into supporting the scab 'Union of Democratic Miners' in a slander campaign against Arthur Scargill and the National Union of Miners. He was disowned absolutely by Workers Power which was to the fore in the struggle to defend Scargill. The incident exposed how real is the danger to the new movements from powerful capitalists such as Robert Maxwell (who leads the attack on Scargill) and imperialist-financed agencies such as the Russian NTS (National Workers Union).

At all times in the Butchenko events the actions of the LRCI and Workers Power were open and principled. Before and during the whole affair our organisations remained *actively to the fore* as defenders of Scargill against the UDM. The Spartacists, whose paper had attached little importance to the defence of Scargill beforehand, now suddenly sought to smear Workers Power with the lie that they collaborated in the witch-hunt of Scargill.

In July and August, Spartacist papers *Workers Hammer* in Britain and *Workers Vanguard* in the US dedicated whole two-page features to the smear that Workers Power had been caught out “lending their services to a sordid cabal of the UDM (a scab miners' organisation in Britain), NTS and other similar forces aimed at breaking the NUM and its president Arthur Scargill.”

The LRCI has replied in detail to the allegations of these and other sectarians who have tried to smear us with criminal allegations about the Butchenko events. That statement is included here. The reader is invited to seriously compare the record, method and arguments of the IWG, Workers Power and the LRCI with the poisoned well of the Spartacists, exemplified in their so-called ‘truth kit’ devoted to slandering the LRCI and Workers Power. To the reader prepared to seriously compare the respective positions of the two groups this ‘kit’ (sic) is revealed as nothing more than a ragbag of gutter-press articles caricaturing the LRCI and testifying only the obsessional sectarian bile of its authors.

It is the only response these infantile leftists, badly caught out by the events in Eastern Europe, can make to the one political tendency which has fought for a genuinely Trotskyist programme of *political revolution*. In that fight the LRCI puts the *working class* at the centre of its perspectives and refuses to entrust the future of the proletarian revolution to the blood-stained Brezhnev and Jaruzelskis of this world.

A REPLY TO CRITICS: THE BUTCHENKO AFFAIR

IN JULY AND August any reader of the “Trotskyist” press who was not familiar with the stock in trade of half truths and downright lies which passes for polemic amongst the sectarians and centrists might have come to the conclusion that Workers Power, British section of the LRCI, had undergone its 4 August 1914.

Workers Press, British section of the newly formed “Workers International”, led the pack with an exposé by Simon Pirani revealing how leading members of Workers Power and *Socialist Organiser* met “behind closed doors” with one George Miller to organise a tour of Britain by a Soviet trade unionist Yuri Butchenko, a representative of the Kuzbass Workers' Union. Miller is a member and British representative of the extreme right wing National Workers' Union (NTS) which has been active in the USSR since the 1930s. This “news” was eagerly seized upon by the *Leninist* a tiny left Stalinist sect in Britain, which rehashed the same story in good gutter press fashion. However, lacking either nerve or imagination, or both, they added nothing to the slanders of the *Workers Press*.

Not to be outdone, although a little slow off the mark, the slavishly pro-Stalinist Spartacist League (US section and font of all wisdom for the International Communist League) weighed in with new revelations in August.

Under the shock-horror headline, “Workers Power caught with Russian fascists” intrepid *Workers Vanguard* reporters revealed the abyss into which the comrades of our British section had fallen. “Workers Power”, it declared, had been caught out “lending their services to a sordid cabal of the UDM (a scab miners' organisation in Britain), NTS and other sinister forces aimed at breaking the NUM and its President Arthur Scargill”. Workers Power, the article continued, was now trying to “squirm out of its responsibility for setting up Arthur Scargill”!

To top it all off, that lively tabloid *International Worker*, paper of the British International Communist Party, added Workers Power to the growing list of CIA agents whose main objective is to disrupt the building of the ICFI led by David North.

To be accused of such crimes by fragments of Healy's International Committee, given their record of paid service for assorted bloody Bonapartist regimes in the Middle East, or by groups that hailed Jaruzelski's crushing of the Polish workers, hardly carries much weight. But unanswered slanders can stick in the minds of those who do not know the rotten records of these organisations. Readers will have to forgive us for going into entomological detail with regard to the events surrounding Butchenko's visit, but our centrist detractors make such an explanation necessary.

What facts underlie this phantasmagoria of
bizarre slanders?

Workers Power participated with *Socialist Organiser* in a united front “Campaign for Solidarity

with Workers in the Eastern Bloc" (CSWEB). Among a number of representatives from socialist and workers' organisations which this campaign brought to Britain was Yuri Butchenko. During his visit to Britain Butchenko broke from CSWEB, threw in his lot with the UDM scabs and joined in the attacks on Arthur Scargill leader of the NUM.

Clearly this was a major set-back for CSWEB, and indeed for the whole attempt to build links between the militant left wing of the British labour movement and the newly formed Soviet independent workers' organisations. It was a victory of the forces of the right within the labour movement and its millionaire backers like Robert Maxwell, for the UDM yellow unions and for the forces of the state. We have no reason to conceal this because throughout the whole period we were engaged in a struggle with these forces, not in any form of collaboration.

The origins of our contact with Butchenko

Through the LRCI's work we had obtained a number of contacts among the developing independent miners' unions in Vorkuta and the Kuzbass. We knew very well that the right wing trade union leaderships, like the AFL-CIO, Force Ouvrière in France and the EETPU in Britain, backed by their governments, were actively working to win these new unions over to right wing positions. In Britain the "left" trade unions were doing little or nothing to combat this, largely because of their traditional links with, and sympathy for, the Stalinist stooge "trade unions". This was especially true of the British NUM led by Arthur Scargill, the members of which were perhaps in the best position to influence these developing unions and prevent them coming under the sway of right wing free marketeers.

Rather than sit back in smug passivity like the sectarians, we decided to take up this struggle, despite our small forces, and organise visits from these organisations to rank and file workers in Britain. Our aim was to influence, argue with and inform these delegations as to the nature of the right wing in the trade unions and the implications of the market economy for workers' lives in the west. We also sought to win practical assistance from class conscious workers in the west for building the new labour movement in the workers' states. We do not believe that a precondition for undertaking these links must be that the Soviet workers' organisations pledge themselves in advance to the defence of the planned economy in the USSR. If they already had those positions there would be no need for pursuing this work of argument and education.

In the autumn of 1989 representatives of Workers Power met Yuri Butchenko in the Soviet Union. In the early 1980s Butchenko had been a student dissident in Leningrad, where he had helped organise a protest against discrimination and persecution of Jewish students in the university. He had been arrested for communicating information about this protest to the western media via the US consulate and sentenced to eight years in labour camps.

After his release, Butchenko worked as chemical worker in his home region, and there, with the arrival of glasnost, he became the editor of a magazine *Kuzbasskie Vedomosti* (Kuzbass chronicle). This was an eclectic journal which supported and promoted the

formation of independent workers' organisations in the Kuzbass mining and industrial region in central Siberia.

Butchenko's magazine carried no articles of a right wing character—no material from the NTS let alone from the fascist Pamyat. Butchenko himself, and trustworthy contacts who had known him for a long period, never identified him as a member of the NTS. We had no evidence then nor have we received any since, that he was a member of the NTS. On the contrary, we received reports that he had expressed his opposition to the NTS in conferences etc.

Of course we knew Butchenko, like nearly all Russian workers, was no defender of the planned economy which he saw as inseparable from bureaucratic dictatorship. He was in favour of "market" relations but, inconsistently, not of the privatising or handing over of industry to capitalists. He expressed views in favour of workers owning and managing their own enterprises. That is, his views were typical of the dangerously confused pro-western ideology which predominates in the new unions.

As an individual we would certainly not have wished to commend his views to British workers nor arranged a tour for him alone. But he was the international representative of the Kuzbass Workers' Union, a mass organisation including the new miners' union in the coalfields of that region. He was present and helped organise the first congress of the new Confederation of Labour. What Workers Power, and later CSWEB, set out to organise was a tour of Britain by a delegation of workers' representatives from the new unions.

Butchenko offered to organise this and to come with them. He did not ask for, nor did he receive, any money from Workers Power or CSWEB for this. Butchenko always claimed that the Kuzbass Workers' Union would pay for the tickets to London but would then wish to raise money for the expenses of the tour and for the unions. We know Butchenko's air ticket was purchased in Moscow in rubles. he always maintained to us that it was paid for by the Kuzbass Workers' Union. Thus it is absolutely false to say that we initiated or arranged the tour with anybody other than Butchenko himself. If Butchenko's ticket was paid for by the NTS we did not know of it nor do we have any evidence that this was the case. Do the slanderers? If so we should be glad to have it.

Enter Miller Stage Right

How then did the figure of George Miller, editor of the periodical *Soviet Labour Review*, and as it transpired, British representative of the NTS, enter the picture? Certainly not, as the slanderers claim, as the co-organiser of the tour.

Shortly before the first CSWEB conference on 26th January Butchenko and a number of Soviet trade unionists sent a fax welcoming the offer to host a visit by a delegation of workers. Through sources in the union movement in Moscow, quite possibly from the NTS, they had acquired Miller's fax number in London and sent their fax asking for it to be forwarded to CSWEB. A phone call from Miller about this fax resulted in the first contact with CSWEB, to hand over the fax. At this point nobody in Workers Power had any knowledge of who or what Miller was. No

agreement, co-operation, or united front was struck at this "meeting" which did not take place "behind closed doors" but at London's School of East European and Slavonic Studies where it appears that Miller is researching for a doctorate.

Workers Power and CSWEB did, however, initiate enquiries as to Miller's political character. All we discovered was that he had links to the right wing in the unions, that he as a "shady character", and that his magazine was very well informed. He himself claimed first to be a Liberal and former anarchist. No connection to the NTS emerged.

The next contact with Miller, again undertaken by him and unconnected to the proposed tour with Butchenko, was when he phoned Workers Power to say that he had staying with him one Yakovlev, a Vorkuta deputy to the Supreme Soviet and representative of the Workers' Committee of this region. He inquired if we wished to meet him. We said yes.

Yakovlev, we discovered on meeting him with Miller, had been invited to Britain by Labour MP Terry Fields and the *Militant*, but had broken from them because they were "too left wing". Yakovlev proclaimed himself a "social democrat". Shortly after this meeting, which was solely to gather information, we discovered from *Militant's* denunciation of Miller and Yakovlev that Miller was a representative of the NTS. Having found out as much as we could from *Searchlight* (a British anti-fascist journal) etc., about Miller, we confronted Miller and Yakovlev with this.

Miller confessed that he was a member of the NTS but denied that the NTS was a fascist organisation. We made absolutely clear to him neither Workers Power nor CSWEB would have anything to do with the NTS in Britain or with Soviet NTS members. Far from any collaboration or agreement being arranged we made clear the exact opposite.

Thus the WRP's accusation that Workers Power and *Socialist Organiser* representatives met with the NTS to "organise a tour of Britain by a Soviet trade unionist" is an outright lie. Its purpose was the exact opposite, to make clear we would not. Pirani ends his article by declaring "There are times and places when against the imperialist and Stalinist enemy, all sorts of expedient alliances are possible—but not this one".

As we have just made clear, we made no alliances with the NTS. But exactly what kind of "expedient alliances" is Pirani referring to? He is presumably referring to the fact that for years and years Pirani, Slaughter, Pilling et al sat and agreed with Healy's "expedient alliance" with Gadaffi and other bourgeois leaders in the Middle East. An "alliance" which brought in millions of pounds to the WRP for 'services rendered'. Although the WRP has apparently renounced these methods, individuals like Pirani who were up to their ears in all this should be a little wary of donning the mantle of accuser.

Spartacist Lies

But what about *Workers Vanguard's* "revelations"? A brief reply to just some of them will confirm what most of the left already knows about the editorial "standards" of this paper, renowned for its lies, half truths and scandalous amalgams.

Workers Vanguard says we provided Butchenko with a *carte d'entrée* into the labour movement "knowing full well that he was at the very least intimately connected with the fascist NTS, through its British representative George Miller". This is a bare-faced lie. As stated above, we confirmed from several independent sources in the USSR that Butchenko was not a member of the NTS. If *Workers Vanguard* has evidence that he was in fact "intimately connected" before the tour, let them produce it.

All that *Workers Vanguard* bases this assertion on is the fact that it was Miller's invitation that got Butchenko the visa to Britain. But is this fact damning as *Workers Vanguard* claims? Not at all. Perhaps ordinary readers are unaware of the complex bureaucratic procedure that the Stalinist USSR and racist Britain devise to block and delay visits between the two countries.

A Soviet citizen requires an exit visa from the USSR issued by OVIR (the bureau for foreign travel). To get this visa the applicant must have an invitation from an individual in the country concerned in both their language and in Russian. Once having obtained a Russian exit visa he/she must obtain a British entry visa. To get this, again, a British citizen must invite, and guarantee the maintenance of, the visitor. Since CSWEB was planning the tour for Autumn 1990 it set about seeking invitations from left Labour MPs, academics etc., *not from Miller*.

Before this process was complete we received a message from Butchenko saying he and three to four other Soviet trade union representatives were coming to Britain in May/June and requesting CSWEB to organise a tour. The tickets would be paid for by the Russian unions. Later enquiries as to how they were getting visas revealed that formal invitations of the type mentioned above had been received from Miller and/or Terry Fields MP. We knew from Soviet sources that Terry Fields had issued many invitations to Soviet trade unionists on his visit to the USSR. Although Miller's involvement was worrying we felt it was no reason to refuse to organise the tour since there was no evidence of any political link between Butchenko, Miller and the NTS.

But it was Miller's invitation which worked with the British Embassy, no doubt because of Miller's connections and the fact that he is a known anti-communist. Originally four miners were coming, but because of the imminence of a national miners' strike only Butchenko came.

At this point we should make something clear. About the only thing that is true in the *Workers Vanguard* article is that Workers Power made a mistake in its August article. Workers Power's 11 July statement made clear they learnt by phone from Moscow that it was Miller's invitation that had secured Butchenko's visa. In an article in the August issue of Workers Power the author said this only became apparent when Butchenko arrived in Britain.

We await with little interest the use to which this error will be put in a future *Workers Vanguard* exposé of our sinister plot.

In fact it was quite simply a mistake. The author of the August article believed wrongly that Miller's invitation had been discovered *after* Butchenko arrived. In fact it was discovered in a telephone call shortly before his departure when he asked us to notify Miller of his arrival. This we refused to do. We met Butchenko at the airport. CSWEB organised his tour without the slightest link with Miller.

Workers Vanguard repeats the accusation that when Butchenko arrived we had a "cozy" relationship with Miller. This accusation is completely untrue. The evidence? We initiated no contact with Miller. Butchenko did. Only when Butchenko announced that he had contacted and was meeting Miller did we send someone along who could understand Russian to find out what they were arranging.

In fact all that Butchenko and Miller decided at this meeting was that Butchenko would visit the TUC International department. *Workers Vanguard* seems to regard it as a crime that we did not denounce or obstruct this visit. Now whilst the International Department of the TUC doubtless performs services for Whitehall and even MI6 it is not simply a nest of spies as the Spartacists would have us believe. Indeed, we can have little reason to doubt that ordinary union head offices perform similar functions. Does that mean we prevent workers from contacting their own union bureaucracy and making demands of it?

For these infantile leftists, however, "they might as well have gone directly to the Foreign Office or for that matter the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square". Isn't it about time that the ICL seriously thought about giving James Robertson a basic Marxist educational on the difference between a trade union and organs of the bourgeois state? But perhaps they could find no one in their ranks able to give it.

As if their farrago of lies and half truths was not enough, *Workers Vanguard* has to add Workers Power's role in "setting up" Arthur Scargill! Now this is very curious. One of the first papers on the left to take up the defence of Arthur Scargill against the witch-hunt was Workers Power, starting with an editorial in its April issue. Meanwhile *Workers Hammer*, the British ICL's paper, and likewise *Workers Vanguard*, remained strangely silent on the issue. Both these august journals suddenly discovered the issue in August when it was to be used as a weapon against the LRCI!

And what is the evidence that we set up Scargill? Workers Power and CSWEB were involved in organising a tour for Yuri Butchenko. Butchenko, unbeknown to us, went with Miller to see the UDM who are key players in the witch-hunt against Scargill and the attempt to drive him from office. Workers Power and CSWEB broke all links with Butchenko over this. Ergo Workers Power is responsible for setting up Arthur Scargill! This is the most ridiculous transparent amalgam yet seen from the *Workers Vanguard* editorial office. Gerry Healy—or Stalin!—could not have done better.

At the root of this pathetic slander is the desire of Robertson and this increasingly Stalinophile sect to

show themselves as the best foot-soldiers for the Stalinist bureaucracy in its "hour of need". Thus they fulminate against us for daring to point out that the Scargill leadership of the NUM played onto the hands of the right wing by their slavish commitment to the state-run Stalinist dominated unions. They froth at the mouth because we dare to compare these state-run miners' unions, with their rotten history of strike breaking on behalf of the bureaucracy, with the scab UDM in Britain.

The Spartacists know which side they are on. They are well on their way to writing off the independent workers' movement in the Soviet Union as counter-revolutionary just as they wrote off the multi-millioned Solidarity workers' movement in 1981, and finally "took responsibility" for the bloody crushing of the movement in 1981.

There is little chance that these brave revolutionaries, secure in their New York offices, will make any concrete attempt to fight the influence of the right wing in the Soviet working class, and even less that they will try to convince the rank and file that there is a revolutionary alternative to Stalinism.

The "defencism" of these characters boiled down to defence of the *Stasi* against the outrage of the workers; their strategy for building a "Trotskyist" party is nothing but hobnobbing with SED bureaucrats, gracing their platforms with uncritical speeches and sending ludicrous and unread pleading telegrams to assorted Stalinist functionaries, Soviet generals etc.

This revolting debasement of revolutionary politics is a product of the terrible degeneration of "Trotskyism" after its post-war crisis and breakdown in the years 1948-51. Despite the ICL's claim to be "anti-Pabloites" their total surrender to Stalinism goes far beyond that of Michel Pablo in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The difference is that Pablo was the secretary of the as yet unbroken and unbowed Fourth International. His capitulation to the triumphant Stalinist bureaucracy was a tragedy. The ICL's self-abasement before Stalinism on its deathbed is still a crime, but it is also a vulgar farce.

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Tony Cliff's stepchildren **Workers Power: the baggage of State Capitalism**

David North's *The Heritage We Defend* is the subject of a critical review by *Trotskyist International* (Summer 1988), new journal of the centrist current led by the Workers Power group, the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI). In a nutshell, the review is devoted to again vindicating WP's "plague on both your houses" line on the 1953 split by the International Committee, then led by the American Trotskyist SWP of James P Cannon, from the Pabloist liquidationism which destroyed the Fourth International. Yet, throughout five densely packed pages, the review never takes note of North's ludicrous misattribution to Trotsky of Hansen's formulation that "Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through".

On the contrary, it takes the logic of this stupidly one-sided formulation to absurdity, asserting that "Castro and co, like Mao and Tito before them, carried out a counterrevolutionary overthrow of capitalism". Ditto for the bureaucratically imposed social revolutions in Soviet-occupied East Europe following World War II. In brief, according to Workers Power, every overthrow of capitalism since the Russian Revolution has been "counterrevolutionary". What could a counterrevolutionary overturn of capitalism mean—except, perhaps, a return to feudalism? The closest thing to this in recent times was the "Islamic revolution" in Iran. But there WP backed the mullah-led "mass movement" unconditionally, just as they supported Polish Solidarnosc' full-blown attempt at counterrevolution despite admitting the Solidarnosc leadership was committed to the restoration of capitalism.

Workers Power carries the political baggage of its origins in a 1975 split from Tony Cliff's International Socialists (now the Socialist Workers Party). It was not until February

1980 and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan that WP renounced Cliff's "third camp" ("Neither Washington nor Moscow") line, adopting a formally Trotskyist position that the Soviet Union was a degenerated workers state.

In typically centrist fashion, however, Workers Power recoiled from drawing the hard revolutionary conclusions. In the abstract, WP called for defence of the Soviet Union; in the concrete, they had "no hesitation in condemning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan" (*Workers Power*, February 1980). But with mealy-mouthed gutlessness, they deemed it "tactically wrong" to openly join the imperialist outcry for Soviet withdrawal until "the forces exist in Afghanistan which can mobilise the masses for the major democratic and socialist goals, and hold the pro-imperialist forces at bay". Now, with a bloodbath looming, an April 1988 MRCI resolution continues to "condemn the invasion as counterrevolutionary", while simultaneously denouncing the Soviet withdrawal! Not one of the some two dozen slogans at the end of the resolution raises defence of the Soviet Union.

Workers Power's line on Afghanistan is a quintessential example of the "crystallized confusion" that Trotsky cited as a prime characteristic of centrism. In the eight years since it repudiated its state capitalist position, WP has continued to try to keep one foot in each camp. In its "Twenty two theses in defence of Trotskyism" (May 1987), the MRCI asserts:

"We reject Stalinophobia—a differential hostility to Stalinism over social democracy or other alien class influences. This, with its emphasis on a monolithic nature for Stalinism ('counterrevolutionary through and through'), has led to softness and accommodation to

social-democratic reformism...." But in practice, on every contemporary issue, Workers Power ends up refusing to defend the deformed/degenerated workers states. And elsewhere WP asserts: "Essential to Pablo's position was a revision of the Trotskyist understanding of Stalinism, i.e. that it is invariably a counter-revolutionary force" (*The Death Agony of the Fourth International*, 1983).

This is hardly an original thesis. Workers Power's Cliffite godparents like to claim occasionally (when overt anti-Sovietism is not in vogue) that they originated in a fight against "the shamelessly opportunist support for Tito's Yugoslavia by the rest of the Trotskyist movement" (*International Socialism* no 76, March 1975). The Cliff group fought against Trotskyism, not Pabloism, arguing as early as 1948 that the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states were "state capitalist". They got themselves expelled from the Fourth International in 1950 for publicly repudiating the FI's defence of the North Korean deformed workers state against US imperialism. And it is precisely in the period 1948-51 that WP locates the definitive "collapse" into centrism of the FI.

Seizing upon the disorientation that gripped the entire world Trots-

kyist movement in the face of the post-WW II Stalinist overturns of capitalism in East Europe, Workers Power contemptuously dismisses the Trotskyists who fought the liquidationism of Michel Pablo, albeit belatedly, partially and primarily on their own national terrain, and who reconstituted themselves as the IC. Cannon just isn't up to snuff for Workers Power, because it took him a few years to catch on. But he led a fight to preserve Trotskyism against those who sought to destroy it. Workers Power takes *no side* in this struggle for revolutionary continuity, and they can hardly claim Cliff as the continuity of Trotskyism.

To believe WP/MRCI, from the FI's "collapse" until WP emerged full-blown on the scene like Athena from the head of Zeus, there existed no real Trotskyists on this planet. It requires a big dose of hubris for a group to anoint itself the first Trotskyists since Trotsky. We can only lay claim to continuing, as best we can, the struggle passed on to us by Cannon, and to him by Trotsky. We can, however, boast that we make available 25 years of our written material in bound volumes for critical examination by the working-class public. Workers Power, like all centrists, is loath to deal honestly with its own heritage. ■

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Soft-core capitalist restorationists **Workers Power: right turn on East Germany**

Last November in the midst of the political revolution which had shattered the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the DDR, Workers Power portrayed the disintegrating remnants of the Stalinist bureaucracy as a force co-equal with imperialism. "Down with Stalinist and imperialist plans to restore capitalism!" declared a resolution "On the political revolution in East Germany" by Workers Power's League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI). Six months later, following the 18 March elections which were swept by the parties of capitalist counterrevolution, Workers Power is demanding that the Stalinist leftovers of the PDS (the renamed SED), who capitulated down the line to the imperialist stampede for capitalist reunification, hold the line against capitalist restoration! How can one explain the above contradiction?

In the April issue of its press, Workers Power writes:

"We must demand that the SPD and PDS have no truck with any Alliance-led government. They must be forced to use their votes in parliament to block any change in the constitution which aids this restoration and any other measures directed against the workers. They must table pro-working class legislation in the current parliament and dare the Alliance to oppose it in front of the workers who voted for them."

This is more than Workers Power's usual parliamentary cretinism. The SPD was the Trojan horse for capitalist counterrevolution in the DDR. They lost out to Kohl's CDU precisely because many figured: why vote for the social democratic lackeys when you can have the banker with the money in his pocket. The SPD has already thrown its lot in as a partner in Kohl's "grand coalition" Alliance government. As for the PDS, on 5 April its delegates to the Volkskammer raised their hands for the unanimous vote to delete the preamble to the constitution which called East Germany "a socialistic state of workers and farmers".

Before the elections Workers Power howled for blood, calling to "hunt down the Stalinist parasites and spies". The evident model that Workers Power had in mind was the mass revolt that toppled the family Stalinist dictatorship of Nicolae Ceausescu in Romania. These Stalinophobic centrists were really stimulated by the sight of Stalinist blood flowing in the streets of Romania. Enthusiating over "a real, armed and bloody revolution", Workers Power glorified the revolt against Ceausescu as a great workers revolution, even comparing it to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917! (What emerged from this glorious revolution was a government which abuses Hungarians and is anti-Semitic but Workers Power can take heart—it

refused to allow King Michael back into the country.) Now, in East Germany, Workers Power embraces the "counterrevolutionary" Stalinists of the PDS who have identified themselves, in more than name, as an effectively social democratic component of the forces for capitalist restoration. In its role as the "opposition" in the "parliament" of the Volkskammer, the PDS is an animal which the Little England Labour Party leftists of Workers Power can really understand.

The chickens come home to roost

In 1980, at the time of the imperialist uproar over the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, Workers Power publicly announced that it had completely broken from its origins in Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party and declared that it had adopted a Trotskyist understanding of the Soviet Union as a bureaucratically degenerated workers state. Although claiming to have rejected Cliff's state capitalist position, Workers Power never broke from the methodology of Third Camp anti-Sovietism, ie, one which views the Stalinist bureaucracy as a purely counter-revolutionary force.

While nominally claiming a position of Soviet defensism around Afghanistan, in the concrete Workers Power condemned the Soviet intervention against imperialist-backed feudal reaction as "counterrevolutionary". (They also denounced the Soviet withdrawal as "counterrevolutionary".) In 1981 they "critically" championed Solidarność even while admitting that Solidarność in power would mean capitalist restoration. Now that the Solidarność-led government in Poland is implementing its programme for capitalist restoration Workers Power pathetically opines: "Poland: No Return to Capitalism"! But, the chickens really came home to roost when Workers Power was confronted by the rapidly unfolding events in the DDR.

Here was the perfect refutation of the Third Camp view of the Stalinist bureaucracy as a monolithic new ruling class, and the perfect confirmation of Trotsky's understanding of the bureaucracy as a brittle and contradictory caste—which is simultaneously dependent on the existence of the collectivised property forms of the workers state while acting as a transmission mechanism for the pressures of hostile world imperialism in undermining the workers states. In the face of mass protest against its rule, and increasingly under the pressure of West German imperialist revanchism, the bureaucracy completely disintegrated. The choices were starkly posed: either a Germany of workers councils to replace the

corrupt, nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy, or capitalist counterrevolution.

“Smash Capitalist Counterrevolution” was the headline of the first issue of *Arbeitermacht*, the newspaper of the German section of Workers Power’s LRCI. But compelled by the logic that the Stalinist bureaucracy is a completely counterrevolutionary force, Workers Power ended up echoing, albeit from the “left”, the imperialist campaign for the annexation of the DDR. Nowhere is this clearer than their demand for the withdrawal of the Soviet Army from the DDR.

In an editorial entitled “Germany—no to capitalist unity” (*Workers Power*, March 1990) they write:

“The Warsaw Pact was created in response to the imperialist threat to the Soviet Union and those states it had conquered. Whilst its troops were and are a form of defence of the post-capitalist property relations of those states, the only combat they have ever undertaken has been the suppression of the insurgent working classes of the GDR, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. That was the Pact’s principal function and we are in favour of its dissolution and the withdrawal of its troops.”

To declare that the only combat undertaken by Soviet troops has been the suppression of the East European proletariat is indicative of a mindset devoid of simple history. What about: 1. the civil war in Russia, 1918-19; 2. the war against Pilsudski’s Poland, 1920; 3. against Japan in Manchuria, 1937 and 1939; 4. the invasion of Finland, 1939; 5. the war against Nazi Germany, 1941; 6. the 1979 intervention in Afghanistan.

Last year, the Soviet Army in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany was politically neutralised by the Moscow government. With the exception of Romania, where there are no Soviet troops, there was no bloodshed. Impelled by his own internal problems, Gorbachev turned the key and Eastern Europe exploded with political ferment—from all quarters, in every conceivable direction from outright capitalist restorationists to anti-bureaucratic Communists.

Gorbachev’s present willingness to negotiate the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the DDR is an extreme example of Stalinist betrayal in the face of imperialist pressure and one which threatens the existence of the Soviet Union. But Workers Power stands with him. Withdrawing the Red Army is obviously necessary to the consolidation of a reunified capitalist Germany. Workers Power stands reality on its head with the claim that the imperialists see the Soviet troops “as a force to prevent any local opposition to restoration in Eastern Europe generally” (*Workers Power*, April 1990).

The Soviet Army plays a contradictory role, reflecting the contradictions inherent in the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracies. In 1953 Soviet troops were used to crush proletarian political revolution in the DDR, yet even Workers Power admits that these troops simultaneously were “a form of defence of the post-capitalist property relations”. Nonetheless they call for the withdrawal of these troops which is nothing more than calling for the creation of a power vacuum which could only be filled by the troops of the West German Bundeswehr and NATO imperialism. Similarly, if Workers Power believes its own statement that the Warsaw Pact was “created in response to the imperialist threat to the Soviet Union” how do they square their nominal claim to defend the Soviet Union

against imperialist attack with the call for the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact?

The bottom line for Workers Power is that reversing the outcome of World War II doesn’t matter. By their lights the bureaucratically imposed social revolutions in Soviet-occupied East Europe following the war were “counterrevolutionary”. (What could a “counterrevolutionary” overthrow of capitalism mean—except maybe a return to feudalism? The closest thing to this in recent times was the mullah-led “Islamic Revolution” in Iran which Workers Power supported because it was a “mass movement”.) Applied to East Germany this idiotic formulation means that the foundation of the DDR represented the “counterrevolutionary overthrow” of Adolf Hitler’s fascist state! In the pages of Workers Power’s theoretical journal *Trotskyist International* (no 4, Spring 1990) we read that “the division of Germany was a reactionary denial of the right of self-determination”. If this is the case then Workers Power should see the 18 March election results as a victory for the self-determination of the German nation!

The Treptow anti-fascist protest

With its view that the Soviet troops in the DDR are an “occupation army” Workers Power was obviously hard pressed to explain that 250,000 citizens of the DDR rallied at Treptow Park on 3 January to honour the Red Army and protest the Nazi desecration of a memorial to the Soviet soldiers who fell liberating Europe from Hitler’s Nazis. Our German comrades initiated a call for a massive workers united-front action to stop the fascists. We brought the call directly to the SED leadership and urged their participation. So out of touch with the working class and so fearful of them, the SED initially resisted our proposal. But as our call was distributed in factories throughout Berlin, the Stalinists mobilised their forces and moved to take over the demonstration. A quarter of a million people came out to protest Nazi provocations and express their will to defend the DDR against capitalist restoration.

As our German press *Arprekorr* noted: “For the first time in the DDR’s history, Trotskyists were able to speak, and called for a workers united front, workers militias and workers and soldiers councils”. Our criticisms of the incompetence and economic mismanagement of the SED party dictatorship and of Gorbachev’s market-oriented perestroika economic reforms in the USSR, drew heckling from the largely SED crowd.

Alarmed by the Treptow mobilisation in which they correctly saw the forces that could prevail against capitalist *Anschluss*, the imperialists and their social-democratic frontmen geared up their campaign to stampede the DDR into reunification. The West German bourgeois press attempted to smear the SED as responsible for the fascist provocations, with headlines like “Fear in the DDR—the SED’s Nazi Trick” and “SED Profits from Neo-Fascism”.

What was the response of Workers Power? In an 18-page pamphlet entitled “Sectarianism and Stalinophilia: The Politics of the Spartacist League”, its Irish affiliate, the Irish Workers Group, sneered:

“Eager to proclaim themselves around the world—deceitfully—as the representatives of Trotskyism in the GDR, their press reprints copious leaflets, speeches and statements reflecting their activity in Berlin. Much of it has

centred on an 'East Berlin Protest Against Fascist Desecration of Soviet War Memorial' at which, they assert, '250,000 Say: No Nazis in East Germany.'

Contrary to our "assertions" that this was a massive anti-fascist mobilisation, the IWG seems to have the same appreciation of the Treptow demonstration as the West German imperialists and the social democrats, ie, that it was all a gigantic ruse by the disintegrating Stalinists to strengthen their state security apparatus.

But, in the DDR—where West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl used skinheads to guard his own mass demonstrations for capitalist counterrevolution—the LRCI obviously felt it couldn't get away with echoing the social democrats' lies against the Treptow demonstration. In its "Action Programme for the Workers of East Germany", issued on 13 February, they write:

"The desecration of Soviet war memorials and Jewish graves, and the racist attacks on immigrant workers show the urgent necessity for an anti-fascist united front, a united front which would include all labour movement organisations, especially those of the immigrant workers, and all honest anti-fascists. The anti-Nazi rally at Treptow was the first step towards this. But it is only a beginning!"

It was a "first step" that Workers Power refused to touch with a barge pole! They wanted nothing to do with a principled and urgent united-front with the SED which was aimed against the stormtroopers for a capitalist Fourth Reich. The SED/PDS completely capitulated in the face of the imperialist campaign of lies and destabilisation following the Treptow demonstration. Now that the PDS is operating like a bunch of immiserated social democrats in their capacity as the "opposition" in the Volkskammer Workers Power calls on them to defend the workers of the DDR against capitalist counterrevolution!

In its March issue *Workers Power* notes: "Shortly after the SED [Treptow] rally...the SED government attempted to re-establish the security police (Stasi) but were prevented by mass mobilisations and seizures of the Stasi buildings. For revolutionaries this is the very stuff of revolution". Here Workers Power is speaking of a mob invasion of Stasi headquarters in Berlin on 16 January. Among those present was a hard core of fascist skinhead types. Prominently displayed was a banner in the form of a West German flag inscribed with "Germany, One Fatherland" and placards reading "SED-PDS, party of the Stasi". This is the "stuff" that capitalist counterrevolution is made of. But in its mindless enthusing over "anti-Stalinist actions" Workers Power couldn't tell the difference between revolution and counterrevolution.

Now current and former members of the SED/PDS and anyone associated with the former Stalinist regime of the DDR face the prospect of being purged in anti-Communist witchhunts (as was done in West Germany, initially by American Army Intelligence using former Gestapo agents and then picked up by the BRD government and the social democrats in the trade unions). Under the watchword of "reds out"—which was the cry of the fascist gangs that infested Kohl's CDU rallies—the forces of capitalist restoration aim to eliminate anyone who would defend the workers' interests. In its post-election coverage even Workers Power admits that "smoothing the path towards capitalism involves purging the state apparatus of any 'unreliable' elements from its Stalinist days" (*Workers Power*, April 1990). Yet WP are

the guys who were insatiable in their calls for the bloodiest "anti-Stalinist" purges.

Why Workers Power lies

To resolve the contradiction between their call to "Smash Capitalist Restoration" and the fact that they sided with capitalist counterrevolution at every crucial stage—from demanding the withdrawal of the Red Army, echoing the social democrats' lies about the Treptow demonstration, cheering the attacks of rightist gangs on Stasi headquarters—Workers Power raves on about Spartacist "Stalinophilia". In the aftermath of the 18 March elections—in which the Spartakist Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands was the only party which took a clear and unambiguous stand against capitalist reunification—Workers Power writes: "Posing as 'defenders of the planned property relations', Spartacist public speakers utterly ignored the forty years of privilege, theft and counter-revolutionary tyranny that Stalinism meant for the workers of the GDR" (*Workers Power*, April 1990).

What did "the Spartacists" say? Here's a quote from the "Manifesto and Programme of Struggle", of which hundreds of thousands of copies were distributed during the election campaign:

"The Spartakist Workers Party of Germany is fighting in this election campaign against capitalist counterrevolution and for a *proletarian political revolution* against Stalinism that goes all the way....

"We are the only ones to fight for a planned economy not ruled by the arbitrary dictates of a bureaucracy but on the basis of broad deep-going workers democracy. The workers must take into their own hands control of the factories and institutions by building soviets [workers councils] in which all currents of the working class are represented.... Thousands upon thousands in the DDR have stuck to the ideals of social justice—workers, collective farmers, soldiers, even many in the bureaucracy. These goals were not wrong: it was Stalinism that betrayed your goals and deformed your communist ideals! The doctrine of 'socialism in one country', that lying invention of Stalin and Bukharin, was the first great betrayal of the October Revolution itself and led to horrible excesses."

We stressed that these elections were a plebiscite, distorted by the imperialist campaign of intimidation, on the very existence of the DDR. It was a vote for or against imperialist annexation of the DDR. And what did Workers Power's followers in Germany do? They called for "abstaining on the vote"!

The LRCI also tries to identify us with the SED's call for a reorganised state security apparatus to stop fascism. "Why at the Treptow demonstration—which we of course supported—didn't you centrally agitate against the SED plan for a new Verfassungsschutz [Office for the Protection of the Constitution]?" asks *Arbeitermacht* (April 1990). Only unmitigated Third Campists would say that the most important thing about a rally against fascist terror in the DDR was to fight against the Stalinist police. What did "the Spartacists" say at the Treptow rally? We quote: "No *Verfassungsschutz* in the world has yet been able to stop the Brown Plague. What we need is a broad organisation of the working masses, the masses of the working people of the whole nation. They must organise themselves in soviets, in workers and soldiers councils." But, how would *Arbeitermacht* know? Despite their proclamations of support they had nothing to do with the

Treptow demonstration. In any case, Workers Power doesn't believe its own lies. In Britain, they acknowledged our call for workers militias to defend against fascist terror while sneering that this "certainly sounds revolutionary—until we find that their main task is to guard Soviet war graves!"

Self-evidently there are numerous political differences between us and Workers Power. But in order to bolster its own interpretation of events, Workers Power freely resorts to falsehood and slander. Why would anyone want to be in an organisation whose leadership knowingly tells grotesque lies to score points against us—or against anyone else for that matter? The road to the crystallisation of revolutionary cadres is obstructed by Disneyworld versions of events. Yet, for Workers Power, keeping Spartacists out of their "public" meetings in England (because we set up a literature table at a public debate with their group some years ago!) has been elevated to the same plane as the liquidation of the deformed workers states. As JV Stalin knew well, lies are the way of resolving the contradiction between one's professed programme and what one does in practice. Workers Power's slander and exclusion is simply the soft-core version of the methods Stalin, backed by force of state power, wielded against his opponents.

Centrists who only betray when it counts

The fundamental point of departure between us and Workers Power over the events in East Germany is our understanding of the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy as a contradictory caste. This view was expressed most profoundly in Trotsky's 1933 work on "The Class Nature of the Soviet State":

"A real civil war could develop not between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the resurgent proletariat but between the proletariat and the active forces of the counterrevolution. In the event of an open clash between the two mass camps, there cannot even be talk of the bureaucracy playing an independent role. Its polar flanks would be flung to the different sides of the barricade. The fate of the subsequent development would be determined, of course, by the outcome of the struggle. The victory of the revolutionary camp, in any case, is conceivable only under the leadership of a proletarian party, which would naturally be raised to power by victory over the counterrevolution."

The Stalinist bureaucracy in the DDR was not defeated by proletarian political revolution, it simply capitulated before an imperialist onslaught.

The very fragility of the bureaucracy's rule imposed upon it authoritarian and totalitarian qualities. Certainly there were many elements who carried out crimes against the proletariat. But by no means was this simply an organisation of careerists or the privileged. The old SED was a mass party with over two million members out of a population of 17 million. In these ranks—including in the army and police apparatus—were many sincere and subjective communists. They rightly felt deeply betrayed by the evidence of lies, corruption and economic mismanagement of the SED leaders.

With its "Down with Stalinism! Down with Capitalism!" line Workers Power acted as traitors to the largely SED/PDS-oriented working masses in the DDR. If Stalinism is the co-equal of capitalism, then why not vote for the fool's gold of the promises of D-Mark "pros-

perity"? By Workers Power's Third Camp logic, it should make no difference that the parties of a German Fourth Reich are now the government of East Germany. On the contrary the workers of the DDR should be celebrating the fulfillment of Workers Power's call to "root out and punish every filthy bureaucrat and secret police agent who made life hell for the GDR's workers for forty years". But now Workers Power tells the working class of the DDR to look to the same "filthy bureaucrats" in the PDS and the social democrats' party of capitalist restoration, the SPD, for salvation.

The imperialists are salivating over exploiting the population of the DDR as a new low-wage ghetto of Western capital and seizing the DDR as a launching pad for the imperialist conquest of the Soviet Union. It won't be easy. Many defensive battles loom ahead. The job of revolutionary Marxists is to make common cause with the struggles of the DDR working class to defend itself against imperialist *Anschluss* and to link these struggles with those of workers in the BRD. This will lay the groundwork at a juncture for the German workers going over to the economic and political offensive—for their own sake and for the growth of a larger scale German revolutionary workers party and to give encouragement and implicit guidance to the proletariat further East.

Workers Power has sought to carve out a niche for itself as the "left wing" of the spectrum of the Labourite left in Britain, something on the order of the position occupied by the British Independent Labour Party in the 1930s. Confronted with having to draw revolutionary conclusions in the face of imperialist World War II and increasing political ferment among the working class, the ILP collapsed. Now in the face of the imperialist drive to reverse the verdicts of World War II and destroy the social gains of the DDR which were built up from the rubble of Hitler's Third Reich, the central contradiction of Workers Power's particular brand of centrism completely exploded. They were incapable of trying to straddle the fence between Trotskyism and the Third Camp. Instead, straight down the line, Workers Power performed as the Third Camp running dogs of capitalist counter-revolution. No amount of lying attacks on the Spartacists can cover up this treachery although it could be a ticket for them replacing Fenner Brockway. ■

Theses on Ireland

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The Butchenko affair: anti-Sovietism comes home to roost **Workers Power caught with Russian fascists, Thatcher's scabs**

The Union of Democratic Miners (UDM) is a scab "union" created to destroy the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). The National Toilers Alliance (NTS) is a Russian fascist outfit with links to one or another imperialist agency going back to Hitler's Nazis in the 1930s. Workers Power is a self-styled Trotskyist group in Britain. What's the connection? Plenty sordid. Workers Power has been caught out lending their services to a sordid cabal of the UDM, NTS and other sinister forces aimed at breaking the NUM and its president Arthur Scargill.

Along with Socialist Organiser, its estranged bloc partners in the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc (CSWEB), Workers Power organised the tour in Britain of one Yuri Butchenko, "executive member of the Siberian-based Kuzbass Union of Workers". For "nine very successful days", as WP puts it, these "leftists" provided Butchenko with an entrée into numerous workers movement meetings, knowing full well that he was at the very least intimately connected with the fascist NTS, through its British representative George Miller.

Then on 5 July, Butchenko appeared at a press conference in London alongside UDM honcho Roy Lynk to lend his voice to outlandish claims that Scargill had salted away up to £10 million of donations made by Soviet miners to the 1984-85 British miners strike. This was just what union-hating prime minister Thatcher and her lieutenants in the Labour right wing needed: a Russian worker, legitimised by speaking before trade-union audiences, taking their side against the most militant union in Britain. Butchenko's claims were picked up and broadcast far and wide by the bosses' media.

Butchenko's surfacing as one of the key players in the anti-Scargill witchhunt forced Workers Power to issue a string of denials, non-denials and conflicting disclaimers, which in sum only confirmed their criminal complicity in this affair. WP tried to pass itself off as a pathetically naive group simply out to make "solidarity" with the "independent workers' movement of the USSR and Eastern Europe" and tragically finding itself implicated in the smear campaign against Scargill. The fact is that these Stalinophobic, rightward-moving centrists have blatantly and directly aided the bourgeoisie, its UDM tool and the Labour/TUC right wing in their attempt to crucify Scargill and break the miners union.

Confessions of an anti-communist "dupe"?

In an attempt to squirm out of its responsibility for setting up Scargill, Workers Power issued three separate

statements dated 11 July, directed at its various constituencies. None of these have been published in its paper, and we can see why.

Addressing the Kuzbass union, WP called on them to "renounce all links with the UDM" while attacking the NUM leadership for its ties to the official Soviet unions. It even lent credence to the witchhunters' charges by appealing to them: "should you wish to pursue the matter of the money sent by Soviet miners to the NUM during their strike, to do so exclusively via the NUM itself."

Addressing the British unions, which the Solidarity Campaign had inveigled into meeting with Butchenko, Workers Power had not a hint of criticism of Scargill, pleading: "Yuri Butchenko has betrayed your solidarity and goodwill. We apologise unreservedly for being the unwitting agency for this person to trade on your internationalism (and ours too)."

WP was confronted with an unforeseen conflict between competing opportunist interests—on the one hand their Stalinophobic appetites, on the other their tailing after the Labour/TUC left of which Scargill is part. So they split from CSWEB following Butchenko's bombshell appearance on behalf of the anti-Scargill rat pack. Workers Power condemned a Socialist Organiser/CSWEB statement for "suggesting that he [Butchenko] is somehow an unwitting dupe of Lynk and the media" (presumably WP had cornered the "unwitting dupe" market that week). WP loftily declared, "We cannot be party, in any way, to its decision to excuse Butchenko's treachery."

This canting hypocrisy came after Workers Power itself had devoted considerable efforts to coddling Butchenko. Only when he publicly joined the anti-Scargill witchhunt and hit the headlines with his press conference did WP decide "a class line has to be drawn between the labour movement and Yuri Butchenko." Two weeks earlier, when Butchenko had insisted that CSWEB condone his meeting with the UDM and take on the NTS as co-organiser of the tour, WP's editorial board issued a lame statement (dated 27 June) deploring his decision "to end his commitments to our tour" after CSWEB rejected "the conditions laid down for collaboration by Yuri". Even then, "Yuri" was invited "to reply to our criticisms in the next issue of this paper", while Scargill's "allegiance to the 'official' stooge unions" in the USSR was blamed for "opening the door to Lynk" and the scab UDM.

Not only does it have trouble keeping its constituencies apart, WP can't even keep its "facts" straight. A piece in the August issue of *Workers Power*, quaintly titled "Problems of solidarity", claims that "it was not until But-

chenko arrived in Britain that we were told he had been formally invited here by Miller." But WP's 11 July "Statement on Yuri Butchenko and CSWEB" reports that it was through a telephone conversation with Butchenko in May, well before his arrival, that "we learnt that Miller had been the person to sign the official invitation papers for Butchenko to come."

It all reads like one of those "I was a Commie dupe" confessions from the McCarthy era, and with about as much sincerity. So how unwitting an agency was Workers Power? Butchenko told them enough, as WP makes clear with breathtaking cynicism in the same statement:

"Only after Butchenko's arrival did he explain to us that he would be meeting Miller. When he did we sent someone along to ensure that Miller did not try to disrupt the plans of the tour organised by CSWEB. At that point Miller expressed no wish to participate in the CSWEB tour and he and Butchenko agreed simply that once the tour was over they would, separately from CSWEB, meet the TUC's international department."

Cozy enough. The "socialists" of CSWEB would introduce Butchenko to the British trade-union movement and then hand him back over to the NTS and Miller for a little jaunt to the TUC "international department"—they might as well have gone directly to the Foreign Office (which Butchenko reportedly later did), or for that matter the US embassy in Grosvenor Square.

And what is the NTS? In its letter to the Kuzbass union, Workers Power oh-so-delicately describes it as "an organisation hostile to the real interests of the labour movement". But shortly before that, in a Solidarity Campaign statement dissociating themselves from two other NTS-connected Soviet workers who addressed the UDM conference in June, Workers Power wrote rather less circumspectly that the NTS "actively collaborated with and fought alongside the Nazis".

Let us tell you a little more about the NTS. This was the "main group used by MI6 for operations inside the Soviet Union until the end of the 1960s", say Bloch and Fitzgerald in *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, adding, "The NTS actively supported the Nazis before and during the 1941 invasion of Russia." John J Stephan in *The Russian Fascists* (1978) notes that of the numerous fascist "solidarist" organisations which proliferated in counterrevolutionary Russian émigré circles in the interwar years, "the Young Russia movement and the National Toilers' Alliance (*Natsionalno Trudovoi Soyuz*—NTS) probably mobilized the widest support."

Stephan explains how "Some solidarists responded favorably to 'radical' Nazis such as Gregor and Otto Strasser"—the leaders of the SA stormtroops. After Hitler purged the SA leaders in the Night of the Long Knives in 1934, life became somewhat harder for the NTS, which was too Russian chauvinist to suit the German Nazis. Nonetheless, "individual NTS members cooperated with Wehrmacht combat units, Rosenberg's Ostministerium, and Kaminsky's Russian Nazi Party during World War II." (The Ostministerium administered the starvation and enslavement of Russia.)

In short, the NTS was a precursor to the contemporary Russian blackshirts of Pamyat. These are the people Workers Power was quite happy to meet and work out

"arrangements" with until Butchenko got on the airwaves. How did it feel sitting down for a friendly chat with people who "fought alongside the Nazis"? How did Miller introduce himself to you—with a stiff-arm salute, or did a simple handshake do?

Tripping over the class line

Workers Power's fronting for Butchenko and his NTS (and UDM) friends recalls the dirty work of Gerry Healy's WRP as the finger-men for the most right-wing agents of British capitalism within the labour movement. The WRP instigated a vicious witchhunt against Scargill and the NUM aimed at isolating the militant union on the eve of its bitter yearlong strike. Then also the weapon of choice was anti-Communism—roasting Scargill for his remark that Polish Solidarność was anti-socialist. The WRP, having spent years pimping for Libya's Qaddafi, the Iraqi Ba'athist regime and a host of other oil-rich Middle Eastern despots, knew exactly what it was getting into. Workers Power got more than they bargained for or know how to handle—a rip-roaring scandal in the British left and labour movement.

In its rapid rightward motion, WP is beginning to take on ever more overtly the political cynicism associated with Healy. In explaining their break with Sean Matgamna's Socialist Organiser over the Butchenko affair, Workers Power attempts to take the "high ground", criticising the SO-inspired CSWEB statement for seeking "solidarity with the emerging labour movements of Eastern Europe—irrespective of their political ideas and affiliations". They even denounce Socialist Organiser for calling on Solidarność to take power in Poland last year, pointing out how "Solidarity is committed to a vicious austerity package and the introduction of capitalism."

WP's falling-out with Matgamna has not an iota of principle to it. To this day they continue to insist: "*Workers Power* was correct to try and build the tour, and to try to get Butchenko to speak to as many workers as possible." Indeed, they attack Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party (SWP) for pulling out of the organising committee and keeping Butchenko from "being able to meet a wider number of rank and file miners"—and thus broadcast his counterrevolutionary filth among even wider layers of the British workers movement!

WP's after-the-fact homilies about political principle ring somewhat hollow given that their chosen bloc partners in the Solidarity Campaign, Matgamna and Cliff, are *explicitly opposed to defence of the Soviet Union*. The whole purpose of this "Eastern Bloc" campaign—the name itself could have been coined by the CIA—was precisely to compete with the right wing on the terrain of anti-Communism. WP says more than it intends when it concedes that after arguing "day in, day out" about "the necessity of fighting the restoration of capitalism": "With Yuri Butchenko we lost those arguments—he was courted and won by the right wing who offered him more money, equipment and publicity than we could." So the big-time anti-Communists could outbid the "left-wingers" in courting a confirmed supporter of capitalism—what a surprise!

The Russian question pointblank

The Butchenko affair is no aberration for Workers Power. As American Trotskyist James P Cannon wrote: "Who touches the Russian question, touches a revolution." Those who cannot draw the class line in defence of the most colossal conquest the working class has yet achieved, the collectivised economy established through the 1917 Russian Revolution, will surely not be capable of finding a class line in defence of trade unions. The Cliffite SWP, which crosses the class line in refusing to defend the Soviet Union, crossed the class line in scabbing on the miners strike. Workers Power, for its part, found itself in bed with Thatcher, Kinnock and the scabs who went on to form the UDM in its campaign for a strikebreaking "ballot" at the time. Now the logic of its Stalinophobia has blown up in Workers Power's face.

Workers Power split from the Cliff outfit in the mid-1970s. At the time of the Soviet intervention into Afghanistan, WP took a step to the left, breaking from the Cliffite line that the Soviet Union is "state capitalist". But it never drew the hard programmatic conclusions. WP continued to view the Stalinist bureaucracy as a purely counterrevolutionary force. Rejecting the programme of Trotskyism, it set out to "re-elaborate" Trotsky's Transitional Programme; renouncing the heritage of the Fourth International, it called for an undefined "Revolutionary Communist International." Above all, Workers Power wanted to have nothing to do with Spartacist "sectarianism". Their bottom line was: if it moves (and it's big enough), tail it—whether it be Khomeini's Iran, Polish Solidarność or (above all) the Labour Party at home.

Thus Workers Power dutifully echoed Cold War social democracy (as well as Reagan and Thatcher) in denouncing the Soviet intervention into Afghanistan (only to turn around and simultaneously denounce the Soviet withdrawal when Gorbachev pulled the troops out). And for years, Workers Power thought that Solidarność was the cat's meow. They had no qualms joining "Solidarity with Solidarity" demonstrations alongside fascistic scum like the Polish KPN, all the while admitting that Solidarność' programme aimed for the restoration of capitalism. And they still call for a return to the "early days" of Solidarność, the days when it wasn't quite so difficult to sell this clerical-nationalist outfit because it was not yet implementing pro-capitalist austerity against the Polish workers.

Faced with the collapse of Stalinism in East Europe and imperialist cheering over the supposed "death of Communism", these centrists veered sharply to the right, giving backhanded support to the capitalist reunification of Germany and appealing directly to British imperialism to back counterrevolution in Lithuania. While claiming to be against the restoration of capitalism in East Germany, Workers Power sided with counterrevolution at every crucial stage—demanding the withdrawal of Soviet troops, echoing the Social Democrats' lies that the massive Treptow anti-fascist mobilisation in January was the result of a Stalinist trick, cheering the attacks of skinhead gangs on Stasi headquarters as the "very stuff of revolution".

Then Workers Power gave its "unconditional support"

to the pro-capitalist Lithuanian Sajudis movement while conceding it contained "semi-fascist elements". Hell, it's crawling with fascists. WP joined Socialist Organiser in a picket of the Soviet consulate in London demanding, "Hands Off Baltic States." *Workers Power* (May 1990) even demanded that the Thatcher government "recognises Lithuania and supplies goods requested by Lithuania without conditions." And lo and behold, the weekly letter from Denis in *Private Eye* (8 June) has No 10 considering "scrapping the entire Navy and selling it off to the Lithuanians."

And now: the Yuri Butchenko affair. To borrow from WP's hypocritical attack on Socialist Organiser, this "has revealed the practical results of their degeneration." Fifteen years ago, when Matgamna was nominally Soviet-defencist and Workers Power not, they entered a short-lived fusion with the cynical argument that defence of the Soviet Union was "a tenth-rate question" (Matgamna). Formally, the tables have turned, with Workers Power now nominally defencist. But WP still retains its deep-going anti-Sovietism and orientation to NATO social democracy. So they end up "unwittingly" getting into bed with anti-Communist witchhunters and fascist counter-revolutionaries. Only a Third Campist could write, as WP did to the Kuzbass union, that "The UDM, as a bosses' organisation, can be compared with your own state run stooge unions." How is it, then, that one massively aided the miners strike while the other tried to break it? The Soviet trade-union leaders did a damn sight more to aid the strike than the anti-Communist TUC.

Workers Power is not and never was Trotskyist. Trotskyism means the struggle for defence and extension of the gains of the October Revolution of 1917. That's why we Spartacists stood with the Red Army in Afghanistan when it fought against CIA-financed feudalists. Why we opposed Solidarność from the moment it set out on a course of capitalist restoration in the autumn of 1981. And in East Germany, where Workers Power tailed behind counterrevolutionary Social Democracy, our comrades of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany fought consistently and uniquely against capitalist reunification and for a Germany of workers councils through proletarian political revolution in the East and socialist revolution in the West.

We have insisted that anti-Sovietism abroad fuels strikebreaking at home. Now Workers Power's repetitive crossing of the class line on the Russian question has played itself out on their home terrain, in a scandal recalling the Healy-inspired witchhunt of the NUM on the eve of the miners strike. Even some of the Labourite centrists of Workers Power may be shaken by the realisation that Stalinophobia has led them to front for the scummiest counterrevolutionary enemies of the workers movement. Those who don't want to end up like the cynical zombies left behind after Healy's WRP imploded had better think hard and long about how their politics got them into this disgrace.

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The Workers Power school of 're-elaboration' Turning on the Butchenko spit

**workers
power**

—no 135,
October 1990

Yuri Butchenko

ON 11 JULY Workers Power issued a statement on the Yuri Butchenko affair in which we stated that in a telephone call with Butchenko he informed us that his official invite papers to this country had been signed by George Miller, British representative of the right wing Russian organisation, the NTS. This was true. In the August issue of our newspaper we said that we only learnt that the official invite came from Miller when Butchenko actu-

ally arrived in Britain. This was a mistake.

It arose whilst attempting to put together an honest account of the Butchenko affair relying on the memories of translators and intermediaries.

Considerable confusion surrounds the bureaucratic procedures needed to get people from the USSR into this country. CSWEB itself had sought to get Labour MPs to issue such invitations to the independent

Soviet miners' organisations.

We are only too happy to correct this simple mistake in our account. A variety of pro-Stalinist organisations, such as the Spartacists, have suggested that the discrepancy between our two versions of the "invite" means we were involved in some nefarious plot aimed at smearing Arthur Scargill and collaborating with imperialism's spy agencies. Having corrected the factual error we can only ask our accusers, what does this prove?

We stand by the political reasons for organising and then terminating the CSWEB tour. ■

We reprint (above) *Workers Power's* statement entitled "Yuri Butchenko" which appeared in its October issue. It is not possible to reprint here the lengthy and hysterical statement on this same question recently issued by Workers Power's Irish co-thinkers in the Irish Workers Group (IWG); stay tuned.

In the previous issue of *Workers Hammer* we published an article—which first appeared in the newspaper of our American comrades, *Workers Vanguard*—entitled "The Butchenko affair: anti-Sovietism comes home to roost/Workers Power caught with Russian fascists, Thatcher's scabs" in which we nailed Workers Power for its scandalous contribution to the witchhunt against NUM leader Arthur Scargill. To briefly recapitulate: Workers Power had organised a tour of one Yuri Butchenko along with Socialist Organiser, its erstwhile partners in the "Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc" (CSWEB). Butchenko's links in Britain were not restricted to the hapless CSWEB and he emerged as a key player in the anti-Scargill witchhunt with his appearance at a 5 July press conference with the UDM's Roy Lynk, picked up by virtually all the bourgeois media.

It turned out that Butchenko had been officially invited by George Miller, the British representative of the NTS. The NTS is a Russian fascist organisation which actively supported the Nazis before and during the 1941 invasion of Russia and which has been used and backed by Western intelligence. (Workers Power itself acknowledged in July that the NTS "collaborated with and fought alongside the Nazis".) Workers Power's own statements hastily issued following Butchenko's press conference confirmed that they knew about Miller's sponsorship of Butchenko and indeed had met with the NTS rep where Miller and Butchenko "agreed simply that once the tour was over they would, separately from CSWEB, meet the TUC's international department" (Workers Power "Statement on Yuri Butchenko and CSWEB", 11 July).

In addition to being caught with Russian fascists and

Thatcher's scabs, *Workers Power* suffered from a "credibility gap" after it denied in its August issue what it had already confessed in its July statements: namely that it knew of the Miller link before Butchenko's tour ever got underway. Now, Workers Power has been forced to concede this "mistake" which occurred, according to the statement here reprinted, "whilst attempting to put together an honest account of the Butchenko affair relying on the memories of translators and intermediaries" or according to the IWG's document because the "author of the August article believed wrongly". The latter document makes clear just how "wrong" the *Workers Power* article was.

In fact, as early as January, Workers Power knew that Miller was a contact for Butchenko in Britain. Butchenko was faxing via Miller's office to CSWEB about the tour. Workers Power was worried enough to "initiate enquiries as to Miller's political character". "All we discovered", according to the IWG's document, "was that he had links to the right wing in the unions, that he [w]as a 'shady character', and that his magazine was very well informed." Later, Miller "confessed that he was a member of the NTS but denied that the NTS was a fascist organisation". Thus assured, Workers Power forged ahead with Butchenko's tour. "Although Miller's involvement was worrying we felt it was no reason to refuse to organise the tour since there was no evidence of any political link between Butchenko, Miller and the NTS." "No evidence"?—Butchenko was simply faxing messages to CSWEB via Miller who had signed the official invitation papers and acknowledged he was in the NTS.

The IWG writes: "it was Miller's invitation which worked with the British Embassy, no doubt because of Miller's connections and the fact that he is a known anti-communist". No doubt! And maybe this had something to do with the TUC international department's eagerness to meet Butchenko, too. But the question is what worked with Workers Power.

Workers Power wants to trivialise the whole affair and pass itself off as the most pathetically naive group of dupes who ever lived and who make "mistakes" in their public accounts. But *politics* are at the bottom of both the scandal and the subsequent cover up. WP writes: "We do not believe that a precondition for undertaking these links must be that the Soviet workers' organisations pledge themselves in advance to the defence of the planned economy in the USSR." Which is exactly how they ended up with scum like Butchenko.

The ground for Workers Power's blatantly anti-Trotskyist statement of purpose has been well-prepared. Thus, the IWG grotesquely demanded that the Chinese ambassador be expelled by the Irish bourgeoisie after the criminal massacre at Tiananmen Square. When Workers Power made its hard right turn over events in East Germany, they tried to resolve the contradiction between their paper call to "Smash Capitalist Restoration" and the fact that they sided with capitalist counterrevolution at every crucial stage by raving on about Spartacist "Stalinophilia". Soon thereafter, pure and simple "Third Camp-

ism" took over and Workers Power demanded that the government of Margaret Thatcher send "goods requested" "without conditions" to the counterrevolutionary Sajudis nationalists in Lithuania. Then the consequences of their bloc with the rabidly anti-Soviet Socialist Organiser for "solidarity" work in Eastern Europe blew sky high with the Butchenko affair.

We have documented Workers Power's sharp right turn in a series of polemics, currently available in our "Workers Power Truth Kit". For its part, Workers Power has descended to the method of "polemics" used by JV Stalin—who, as the story goes, is the source of the statement that paper will take anything that's written on it. Workers Power says we are a "pro-Stalinist organisation"—this is a shameless and very cynical lie. But it is mainly an indication of how accelerated Workers Power's departure from any pretence to authentic Trotskyism has become. No amount of lying attacks on the Spartacists and whingeing apologies for their treachery can cover up WP's hard drive back into the Third Camp of the running dogs of capitalist counterrevolution. ■

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