
Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League

—a bulletin series of opponent material

NUMBER 5

The Bolshevik Tendency

**Spartacist Publishing Company
Box 1377 GPO
New York, New York 10116**



**July 1988
whole no. 5
\$2.00**

"HATE TROTSKYISM, HATE THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE"

Number 5 -- The Bolshevik Tendency

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This collection of materials of the "Bolshevik Tendency" (BT, formerly "External Tendency") is the fifth in a series published by the Spartacist League reproducing criticisms of the SL written by our opponents. In 1975, we published the first numbers, which presented hostile polemics against Trotskyism and the Spartacist League from several different centrist or centrist-sounding directions: No. 1 reprinted a bulletin on the SL from the Internationalist Tendency, a current of the early 1970s coming out of the American SWP which stood somewhat to the left of Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat before decomposing; No. 2 reproduced a leftist-sounding critique of the SL penned by a couple of then-recent ex-members in the process of embracing the content of social democracy; No. 3 contained Tim Wohlforth's 1973 pamphlet "What Is Spartacist?" written in the service of the now-notorious Gerry Healy. The entire "Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League" series is now back in print; for descriptions and ordering information see below.

In his trenchant critique of Bukharin's Historical Materialism, the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci outlined an approach to ideological struggle:

"We certainly have the impression that Bukharin only wants to attack the weakest people and on their weakest points (or the points most inadequately sustained by the weakest thinkers), in order to win easy verbal victories (since one cannot talk of real victories). He is under the illusion that there is some similarity (apart from the formal and metaphorical one) between the ideological front and the politico-military front. In the political and military struggle it may be good tactics to break through at the points of least resistance in order to be in a position to invest the

stronger points with the maximum forces made available by having eliminated the weakest auxiliaries, etc. Political and military victories, within certain limits, have a permanent and universal value, and the strategic end can be attained in a decisive way with general effects for the whole. On the ideological front, however, defeat of the auxiliaries and the minor followers has an almost negligible importance...."

--Antonio Gramsci, "Critical Notes on an Attempt at a Popular Presentation of Marxism by Bukharin," Prison Notebooks (1926-37)

We take Gramsci's injunctions broadly: in the spirit that polemical struggle, unlike military struggle, should not focus on the weakest points, we aim to select for attention not the threadbare reformists but rather the more adeptly slithering centrists, the most leftist-sounding critics, and to select from their materials arguments we and perhaps they would consider interesting, representative or important. For the purposes of this series the Bolshevik Tendency (formerly External Tendency) is useful. The BT -- a well-financed collection of embittered ex-members of ours whose own motives are obscure to say the least -- attempts (some of the time) a posture of left criticism of the SL from an ostensibly Trotskyist standpoint. Like Tim Wohlforth, the BT is not known for honesty but can wield its literary capacity to produce arguments that our members and supporters do and should think about. The first issue of the BT's publication, featuring their article on "The Robertson School of Party Building," has already been made available as No. 4 of our series.

This collection, No. 5, begins with a recent letter (8 April 1988) from the BT. The letter, which is largely con-

cerned with recent SL/BT exchanges over Afghanistan, winds up with the BT's claim that the most dramatic "evidence" of the SL's political degeneracy is shown by three instances:

"The SL's cowardly flinch on saving the U.S. Marines in Lebanon in 1983; its denial of the Soviets' right to defend their airspace at the height of the KAL 007 flap; and its characterization of the loss of a handful of Star Warriors aboard the U.S. spy shuttle 'Challenger' in 1986 as 'tragic'."

We are reproducing here the BT's original polemics on these subjects: three articles by the BT/ET originally published in January 1984, which seek to make a case that the Spartacist League "flinched" in a social-patriotic direction over U.S. Marines in Lebanon and over Reagan's KAL 007 anti-Soviet war provocation, and an article from the BT's publication 1917 which makes a similar argument regarding the Challenger shuttlecraft disaster.

As is our practice in this series,

we are not including here much of the material by the SL about the BT which has appeared in our newspaper, Workers Vanguard (every back issue of WV is available for purchase from us and the indexed bound volumes are available for reference at many major libraries). We are including, as background to the letter from the BT which begins this bulletin, the WV article to which the BT letter was objecting as well as our published reply to the letter. As a general response, we reprint here a 1984 article from Workers Vanguard, "Marxism and Bloodthirstiness."

We do have one introductory observation: that whatever the SL is, we cannot be as the BT presents us. According to the BT, we are a bureaucratic organization of would-be infallible leaders served by an increasingly cowed and/or cynical membership. But such an organization could have no reason to publish a series like this one, and indeed, among all the bureaucratized organizations we have encountered and read about, none ever has.

-- 26 June 1988

The Spartacist League Makes Available the Polemics of Its Opponents on the Left

Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League

—a bulletin series of opponent material

"He who takes somebody's word for it is a hopeless idiot who can be dispensed of with a simple gesture of the hand."

—V.I. Lenin

Bulletin No. 1 March 1975, \$3.00 (58 pages)

- Reprint of "Spartacist League: Anatomy of a Sect"
—From an "Education for Socialists" bulletin (June 1974) nominally published by the Canadian Revolutionary Marxist Group in the interests of its American cothinkers, the Internationalist Tendency
- Reprint of the Spartacist League's critique "Mandelites Falsify History to Attack SL"
—From *Workers Vanguard* No. 59, 3 January 1975

Bulletin No. 2 April 1975, \$1.75 (34 pages)

- Reprint of "The Fall of Allende and the Triumph of the Chilean Counterrevolution—the Spartacist League and the Strategy of Abstentionist Putschism"
—Originally published by The Communist Internationalist Group, November 1973
- Preface: Letter to Spartacist League Central Office from Comrade Small, 12 February 1974

Bulletin No. 3 August 1975, \$2.75 (95 pages)

- Reprint of "What is Spartacist?", by Tim Wohlforth, Second Edition (June 1973)
- Reprint of "The Wohlforth League: Counterfeit Trotskyists"
—From *Spartacist* No. 17-18, August-September 1970
- Reprint of "The Workers League and the International Committee: A Statement by Tim Wohlforth,"
11 January 1975
- Reprint of "Confessions of a 'Renegade': Wohlforth Terminated"
—From *Workers Vanguard* No. 61, 31 January 1975

Bulletin No. 4 Winter 1986, \$1.00 (32 pages)

- 1917, *Journal of the Bolshevik Tendency*, No. 1
First issue of the publication of the Bolshevik Tendency, formerly "External Tendency of the Spartacist League," includes "'I Liked Gerry Healy...': The Robertson School of Party Building" and "SL's Cop-Baiting Celebrity: 'Powerful Testimony'...to the Police"

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8 April 1988

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New York, NY 10116

Comrades:

In reading your latest anti-BT screed (*Workers Vanguard* No. 449, 25 March) we are reminded of James P. Cannon's complaint that "Lenin said: 'It is very hard to find a conscientious opponent.' That was in Russia. In America it is impossible." Plus ca change...

No one reading your piece would have any idea that what you are polemicizing against is our decision to adopt the slogan "Military Victory to the Soviet Army in Afghanistan" in place of "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan." Your polemic is deliberately intended to convey the impression that we are changing sides in Afghan conflict--rather than changing the formulation expressing our military support to the Soviets and their allies.

You quote bits of comrade Tom Riley's intervention at your 5 March forum in Toronto, but carefully edit out the clear and unambiguous reiteration of Soviet defensism which formed the framework for his remarks. Of course, had you accurately reported the content of his intervention, it would have completely disproved your conclusion that the BT is "preparing to set up its tent in the Third Camp."

As cde. Riley pointed out, "Trotskyists never hail Stalinist traitors or their state" because doing so obscures the treacherous and anti-revolutionary character of Stalinism. The intervention of the Soviet army in Afghanistan was historically progressive inasmuch as it contributed to the defense of the USSR. It also represented a possibility of significant social progress for the Afghan masses--particularly women. Trotskyists are not indifferent to this. The reason that it was a mistake to "hail" Brezhnev's army in Afghanistan--while at the same time necessary to defend it militarily--is because it possessed at every moment the capacity to betray the Afghan women, workers and leftists who placed their faith in it.

The SL's stunted branch in Toronto, which styles itself the "Trotskyist League of Canada," gave your Afghanistan line its crudest expression when they marched in an International Women's Day demonstration on 5 March, proudly holding aloft a banner with giant letters a foot high proclaiming "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" The fine print at the top of the banner qualified this slightly with an observation to the effect that a "Red Army Withdrawal Would Mean Horrible Bloodbath." Comrade Riley's intervention at the TLC forum that night pointed out the obvious absurdity of "hailing" an army which was on the verge of setting up a "horrible bloodbath." He explained that the Stalinists' evident willingness to betray the

Afghan women and leftists who had trusted them was proof that the SL's "hail" formula had been flawed **from the beginning**. On the demonstration earlier in the day, the TLC members chanted, "Down with Khomeini in Iran--Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" The BT contingent counterposed, "Down with Khomeini in Iran--Oppose Gorbachev's Sell-Out in Afghanistan!" This slogan the TLCers idiotically denounced as "Shachtmanite!"

You rhetorically ask whether the Soviet army's struggle against the Nazis was "just 'Stalinist treachery'." Perhaps you think that the Trotskyists should have been "hailing" the Stalinist apparatus in that struggle as well? Trotsky thought differently:

"During the military struggle against Hitler, the revolutionary workers will strive to enter into the closest possible comradely relations with the rank-and-file fighters of the Red Army. While arms in hand they deal blows to Hitler, the Bolshevik-Leninists will at the same time conduct revolutionary propaganda against Stalin preparing his overthrow at the next and perhaps very near stage.

"....**Our** defense of the USSR is carried on under the slogan: 'For Socialism! For the World Revolution! Against Stalin!'"

--*In Defense of Marxism*, p 20

Far from "hailing" the Stalinist military apparatus, as you propose, Trotsky proposed to combine military defense of the property forms with preparations for the political revolution **against** the bureaucracy. This is how Trotskyists defend the Soviet Union.

Your polemic contains one of the subterfuges which you used in 1983 to defend your decision to call yourselves the Yuri Andropov Brigade, after the Stalinist hatchet man who played a key role in the counterrevolutionary suppression of the Hungarian workers uprising of 1956. Unable to attack our Soviet defensist position then or now, in both cases you clumsily ascribe to us a position which you know we do not hold--i.e., "Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through and to the core" and then flail away at the straw man you created. Who do you hope to fool with such shoddy debaters' tricks?

Your assertion that the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan "goes against the grain" of "socialism in one country" is, on its face, simply stupid. Was Stalin "going against the grain" of Stalinism when he intervened in Finland in 1939? Or when he decided to expropriate the East European bourgeoisie after the war? Of course not. On another level though this formulation is perhaps not so accidental. Those who despair of the historic possibility of the working class, led by a conscious Trotskyist vanguard, intervening to change the world have often in the past looked to one or another alternative agency for social progress. This is the political significance of your inclination to "hail" the Stalinist bureaucracy and identify yourselves with Andropov et al.

However, as we have pointed out before, the most dramatic evidence of the political demoralization of the ex-Trotskyist leadership of the Spartacist group is its fixation on acquiring various material assets--particularly real estate. When this conflicts with the militant phrase-spouting and/or adulation of Stalinists there is no question which has precedence. The SL's cowardly flinch on saving the U.S. Marines in Lebanon in 1983; its denial of the Soviets' right to defend their airspace at the

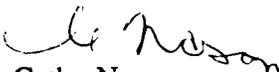
height of the KAL 007 flap; and its characterization of the loss of a handful of Star Warriors aboard the U.S. spy shuttle "Challenger" in 1986 as "tragic," are all evidence of this.

In view of your apparent interest in the implications of the correction in our formulation of Soviet defensism in Afghanistan, and your insistence that those who refuse to "hail" the Stalinists are headed for the Third Camp, we propose a public debate on the question--in either New York or Toronto--at the earliest mutually convenient date. Unlike the Toronto forum in March, where we were permitted only a **single** speaker for three minutes, a public debate would permit a thorough airing of the relative merits of our respective slogans: "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" vs. "Military Victory to Soviet Army in Afghanistan!"

Given your politically cowardly record of refusing to debate us in the past we are not anticipating a positive response to this challenge. Still, you did publish a retraction of your earlier erroneous report that we had participated in your exclusion from a San Francisco Palestinian demonstration (*WV* No. 446, 12 February), so perhaps you will once again surprise us.

We look forward to your reply.

Fraternally,



Cathy Nason
for the Bolshevik Tendency

BT Says Don't Hail Red Army in Afghanistan

...or anywhere else. Looking down the barrel of Cold War II, the crew of sour ex-members who now make up the "Bolshevik Tendency," formerly External Tendency, fled the Spartacist League. They found our forthright Soviet defensism too hot to handle. As we pointed out in "The 'External Tendency': From Cream Puffs to Food Poisoning" (*WV* No. 349, 2 March 1984): "If the ET were more honest, they would admit that they hated it when we hailed the Soviet Red Army's military intervention in Afghanistan." "Not true" carped the ET/BT, who at the time were ever so modestly posturing as the sole repository of authentic Spartacism against the supposed "degeneration" of the organization they quit. "We do hail the Red Army's intervention against the barbaric Afghan reactionaries," they said in the May 1984 "Bulletin of the External Tendency of the iSt."

But claiming to stand on the red side in Afghanistan doesn't go down well in the anti-Soviet swamp in which the BT mingles. Not that anyone ever took their purported politics seriously (to wit, the BT was never excluded from any of the pop-front meetings or mobilizations for its proclaimed Soviet defensism, in contrast to the treatment we've been handed). Nonetheless even the pretense of defending the Red Army intervention in Afghanistan has become an obvious encumbrance to the BT's appetites to share the sheets with the rad-libs and social democrats. Now the cards are on the table.

At a March 5 public forum of the Trotskyist League of Canada entitled "Finish Off CIA's Afghan Warriors!" Tom Riley, leading light of the Canadian BT, gave full vent to what has always been their deeply felt posi-

tion. On the occasion of a meeting to celebrate International Women's Day, in particular in defense of Afghan women against the inevitable bloodbath that will come if the Soviets pull out, Riley declared: "Trotskyists never hail Stalinist traitors or their state.... The slogan 'Hail Red Army' is not a Trotskyist slogan, because what it tells workers is to trust the Stalinists, put your faith in the Stalinists, hail the Stalinists. It disappears the political treachery of Gorbachev and the other parasites he represents...." So what about the Red Army's heroic struggle to crush Hitlerite Nazism—just "Stalinist treachery"?

What the BT "disappears" is the contradictory character of the Stalinist bureaucracy. The line of "Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through and to the core," a more concise and eloquent expression of the BT position, first appeared as a one-sided formulation during the Socialist Workers Party's 1952-53 internal struggle against the pro-Stalinist Cochran-Clarke liquidators (Joseph Hansen repeatedly defended this formulation in internal documents). But who in the USSR could really fit this description? Only a native Russian *Pamyat* fascist, or a CIA "mole" in the KGB. In fact, in the *Transitional Program* Trotsky described the *contradictory* nature of the bureaucracy: "all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F. Butenko)." But Riley & Co. do not want to know these things; they prefer the image of soul-destroying, monolithic Stalinist totalitarianism.

According to Riley: "It's not possible to make a meaningful distinction in the Marxist sense between

an army and the state which controls it, in this case a degenerated workers state. The state is an armed body of men defending a particular set of property forms." But the property forms in the Soviet Union are, despite its Stalinist degeneration, proletarian. Riley's syllogism is hardly original. In arguing against defense of the Soviet Union at the start of World War II, Max Shachtman, leader of the petty-bourgeois opposition within the SWP, wrote: "We have never supported the Kremlin's international policy... but what is war? War is the continuation of politics by other means. Then why should we support the war which is the continuation of the international policy which we did not and do not support?" Trotsky replied: "we are presented then with a rounded-out theory of *defeatism*.... Then why not say it?" Shachtman the doubting soon became Shachtman the confirmed Third Camp Soviet-defeatist, claiming that the Soviet Union was ruled by a new "bureaucratic collectivist" class. Four years ago, the ET denied being Shachtmanite because they still endorsed "Hail Red Army!" What next for the BT?

The Red Army intervention in Afghanistan was a defense of these property forms against a counter-revolutionary, imperialist-sponsored Islamic insurgency on the Soviet Union's crucial southern flank. Moreover, the Soviet intervention offered the possibility of extending the gains of the October Revolution to the hideously oppressed Afghan peoples. But that was never the intention of the Kremlin, for it goes against the grain of the reactionary dogma of "socialism in one country." *The Stalinists never hailed the Red Army in Afghanistan, only the Trotskyist Spartacist tendency did.*

As comrade Trotsky put it in the 1939-40 fight against Shachtman/Burnham's opposition to the defense of the Soviet Union in the Socialist Workers Party, "in the final analysis, through the interests of the bureaucracy, in a very distorted form the interests of the workers' state are reflected. These interests we defend—with our own methods" ("From a Scratch to the Danger of Gangrene," *In Defense of Marxism*).

In our 1984 article on the External Tendency, we noted that "These characters logically would fit right in with the Weinsteinites, late of the Socialist Workers Party, behind whom stands the lure of America's 'mainstream' social democrats, the Democratic Socialists." Now the BT has qualitatively accelerated their march on this course. The most chemically pure rendition was translated on "Canadian soil," long dear to Tom Riley. On February 2, the BT hooked up with the Alliance for Socialist Action (the latest incarnation of Canadian Mandelism) to initiate a popular-front demo over Central America around the sole demand "Oppose U.S. Contra Aid!"

A BT letter, complaining that the TLC refused to join in peddling this as a "single issue" slogan for a "united

front," read like an SWP textbook defense of its "Out Now" slogan during the Vietnam War. The SWP argued that its "antiwar coalitions" were not pop-frontist because they were built on this "single issue" (although it soon became the rallying cry of bourgeois defeatism once the more farsighted elements of the ruling class realized that the U.S. wasn't going to win). The BT wrote: "there were no bourgeois participants in the 2 February demonstration—but your position seems to be that it was 'unprincipled' because there hypothetically *could* have been."

Hypothetically?! Opposition to U.S. contra aid is the on-again, off-again position of a hefty chunk of the warmongering Democratic Party in the U.S. itself. But in Canada this line sells at really bargain basement prices. Indeed, Tory prime minister Brian Mulroney could have marched under this banner. He opposes "U.S. contra aid" as well (as has the bourgeoisie of virtually every other imperialist country from the get-go). Where Reagan boosts the loser contras, the Canadian imperialists propose instead to send "peacekeeping" troops to Central America to hold the line against "Communism." The

key to fighting the imperialist war moves is to *defend Nicaragua* by united *working-class* action.

But that would be beyond the pale, because it would mean facing the question of revolution. Ingratiating themselves with the Mandelite surrogates of Canadian social democracy, the BT wasn't about to oppose their "own" ruling class. Indeed, even the BT's *own* placards, chants and speech at the demo contained not so much as a hint of Soviet defensism in Nicaragua. Nor, for that matter, will one find any call for defense of the Soviet Union today in their articles in 1917 on Central America, Poland and Gorbachev—and that takes conscious effort!

So the BT is preparing to set up its tent in the Third Camp. In light of their whole trajectory, this was quite predictable. But some questions remain. Why does the BT continue to claim in its press that it upholds long-standing principles of the Spartacist League in flat contradiction to its political appetites and sought-for political allies? And why does it have a nasty tendency to create provocative incidents in our presence and then howl about it? Or as we headlined in *WV*, "Garbage Doesn't Walk By Itself, What Makes BT Run?" ■

BT Protests Too Much

[We reprint below our editorial reply to the BT's letter of 8 April 1988 (see previous pages). This reply appeared in *Workers Vanguard* No. 453, 20 May 1988, accompanying excerpts from the BT letter. In this pamphlet, the BT letter is reprinted in full.]

So you say you're for "Military Victory to the Soviet Army in Afghanistan." You're even "not indifferent" to the fact that the Soviet Army intervention meant social progress to Afghan women—like literacy and removing the veil. How very big of you, especially since for the last six years you've remained conspicuously close-mouthed on Afghanistan. But what does it mean to call for "military victory" now, precisely when Gorbachev & Co. are pulling the Soviet troops out? It's an empty statement to try to cover the fact that you're openly renouncing the Spartacist slogan, "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!"

We always said if the BT/ET were honest, they'd admit they hated that forthright stand, which was reviled in the rad-lib milieu caught up in Jimmy Carter's "human rights" crusade, the "moral rearmament" phase of the post-Vietnam anti-Soviet war drive. So now the BT has finally come out

with it, but they're still trying to weasel. As we pointed out in *WV* 449, they're paying the admission price to crawl into the all-Canada popular front: no "soft-on-Russia" pinkos allowed.

But the BT's letter does have the virtue of putting it baldly. "Trotskyists never hail Stalinist traitors or their state," they say, "because doing so obscures the treacherous and anti-revolutionary character of Stalinism." And they wonder why we say their real position is Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through! What is this "Stalinist state" (shades of Shachtman!)? This completely wipes out the fundamental Trotskyist understanding of the dual character of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which seeks to conciliate imperialism while resting on (and at times forced to defend) the proletarian property forms which issued from the October Revolution. Their statement wipes out the whole basis for Soviet defensism, which is the foundation of the Trotskyist call for workers political revolution to oust the Stalinists.

The bottom line is, *it isn't their state!* The Soviet Union belongs to all the workers of the world. The Stalinists' nationalism undermines the USSR, internationalist in its very foundations; their attempts to seal

deals with imperialism (like over Afghanistan) jeopardize its defense. As Trotsky wrote in 1932, "We accept the workers' state as it is and we assert, 'This is our state.' Despite its heritage of backwardness, despite starvation and sluggishness, despite the bureaucratic mistakes and even abominations, the workers of the entire world must defend tooth and nail their future socialist fatherland which this state represents."

This passage was quoted in July 1941 by *Czerwony Sztandar* (Red Flag), the paper of the Trotskyists in the Warsaw Ghetto, in a statement on Hitler's invasion of the USSR. "The first workers state is fighting for its existence," they wrote. "The war of the Soviet Union against Hitler is the war of the international proletariat; it is our war." No sir, BT, you won't even hail the Red Army's fight to smash Nazi barbarism. But the Trotskyists of the Warsaw Ghetto did. They end their declaration proclaiming: "Long live the Red Army! Long live the Russian Revolution! Long live the international revolution!"

Our readers might also take a look at the front page of the American Trotskyists' *Young Spartacus* (November 1932) on the anniversary of the October Revolution, headlined "Hail Red Russia!" ■

"A Loss of Nerve and a Loss of Will"

We condemn the slogan "Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive" as a cowardly, social-patriotic betrayal of the Trotskyist tradition of the iSt. The acid test of a communist leadership occurs at times of revolutionary opportunity or crisis. The demolition of the U.S. Marine and French Foreign Legion barracks in Beirut last month was just such a crisis. Trotskyists take a side in a military confrontation between the imperialist hit-men and the oppressed Muslim population of Lebanon. After weeks of U.S. Navy warships pounding defenseless Muslim villagers, while the "peacekeeping" Marines launched increasingly aggressive attacks on Muslim militiamen, a few hundred of these professional killers were given a richly deserved one-way ticket to hell. We say: Good riddance! Two, Three, Many Defeats for Imperialism!

But this is not what the SL/US leadership says. They solidarize with the desire of the remaining Marines to save their skins. "Marines interviewed in Beirut wanted out, now, alive. We can support that." The tearful laments of the families of the deceased thugs are quoted without comment: "Those poor boys dying, and I'm sure they don't know what they're dying for."

Further on in the article the SL leadership explains that it raises its shameful slogan for saving the lives of the "poor boys" of the Marine Corps to evoke "the widespread anti-government outrage felt by the American masses at Reagan's squandering of life in the Lebanon 'quagmire'". It both saddens and sickens us to read this social-patriotic crap in the paper which for over a decade has been the world's leading exponent of revolutionary Marxism. We say that every lifer "squandered" in Lebanon is one less who will be wading ashore in the upcoming Battle of Managua. Two, Three, Many "Quagmires" for Imperialism!

U.S. Marines: Live Like Pigs -- Die Like Pigs!

Who are these Marines (and French Foreign Legionnaires[?]) whose lives Robertson wants to save?

"They are the world's most notorious imperialist butchers. They have the blood of millions of toilers on their hands, from Indochina to North Africa. The very words are synonymous with the bloody suppression of colonial revolt..."

(Workers Vanguard, No.312, 3 September 1982)

The parallel between the call for rescuing the Marines and the SWP's "Bring Our Boys Home" slogan from the Vietnam era is so striking that the leadership feels they have to address it. You see, Vietnam was a social revolution, Lebanon is not. In Vietnam, "the defeat of the U.S. expeditionary force...was key to victory of the social revolution." But in Lebanon, "no side is fighting imperialism. On the contrary, from the PLO to Jumblatt to Gemayel, all sides are jockeying for sponsorship from one imperialist power or another." Who is going to be fooled by this logic-chopping? Everybody knows that the "peacekeepers" are in Lebanon to prop up Gemayel. If "no side is fighting imperialism" then who blew up the barracks? Of course revolutionists don't support any of the sides in the vicious inter-communal bloodletting. But military attacks on imperialist targets are something else.

Workers Vanguard is right about one thing though: Lebanon is not like Vietnam. It's like Northern Ireland. When the Provos engage in criminal acts of terror against the Protestant population, we denounce them. But when they blow away a couple of hundred crack imperialist "peacekeepers" we defend that action. In Lebanon Trotskyists have the same attitude.

The sleazy attempt to sign Trotsky's name to this capitulation by tacking on a couple of quotes from the Transitional Program to the end of the article is right out of the Wohlforth school of politics. It is a new low for WV. In the quotations cited, Trotsky talks about intersecting the muddled, inchoate opposition of the masses to imperialist war which they express by support to bourgeois pacifism. He doesn't propose that revolutionists should raise social-patriotic slogans themselves! For the SL leadership to try to prostitute the Transitional Program in order to justify the call to save the lives of Reagan's killers is repugnant, as well as dishonest.

"The American masses do not want to die in Beirut" says WV. But that's not the issue. The pro-imperialist "American masses" don't want the U.S. Marines to die in Beirut, and neither does the SL leadership. We say: "Marines: Live Like Pigs, Die Like Pigs!"

"The Main Enemy Is At Home, Sometimes"

Last year when the Israeli conscript army invaded Lebanon, Robertson et al were not so concerned about their well-being. When we raised calls for the Israeli workers to strike against the war and for the Israeli soldiers to turn their guns around, in addition to the main focus of defense of the PLO, the SL leadership slandered us as "Zionists." Throughout the invasion and to this day, the SL leadership, despairing of the fact that there are no Israeli Bolsheviks to implement such calls, refused to raise them. Instead WV argued that "opposition to the war right now depends, above all, on how many Israeli soldiers come home in coffins" (Workers Vanguard, No. 309, 9 July 1982).

Robertson & Co. hoped that in the absence of revolutionary cadres (the subjective factor in history), the objective effects of a lot of casualties would somehow produce a roughly correct response from within the Israeli working class.

But now when it is Americans in Lebanon, the leadership has suddenly developed a humanitarian concern for their safety. To the correct slogan of "U.S. Out of Lebanon, Now," Robertson et al tack on the hope that they will be brought out "alive." From "Kill-'Em-All" hysteria to "Save-'Em-All" social-patriotism. The SL leadership is politically adrift.

Eventually a lot of U.S. casualties in Lebanon would have the same effect as in Israel — enough of them will produce war weariness. However, in lieu of any mass opposition to the U.S. presence in Lebanon, rather than intersecting pacifist sentiments, the SL's call intersects the deployment debate being carried on by the U.S. bourgeoisie.

John Stennis, the reactionary Dixiecrat from Mississippi and chairman of the Armed Services Committee, has the same line on what to do with the Marines in Lebanon as the SL. He wants them out, now, alive. He motivated his position in a speech to the Senate:

"Without luck -- I will put it this way -- we can quickly get into a spot just like we were in Vietnam mighty easy.
...The real concern and meaning to our people is that, by and large, they are the ones that are going to have to put up the boys and the blood and the members of their families to fight a war if we get into it now or later."

"peacekeepers" are in Lebanon to prop up Gemayel's "government" and everyone knows it. This has naturally brought them into conflict with Gemayel's domestic opposition (which is currently aligned with Syria). Hence a lot of the Muslim population of Lebanon would like to drive the Marines (and the French and Israelis) out. Ergo the attack on the Marine headquarters and on the French paratroopers. (The latter have been strangely absent from the coverage in WV and YSp. Is the lack of concern for their safety and well-being perhaps because they are not Americans? We look forward to the next issue of Le Bolchevik.)

The Marine encampment in Beirut represents an American toehold in the Near East. The SL leadership can pretend that the bombing of the headquarters was an act of god (or allah) if they like but everyone else in the world sees it differently. The White House blamed Shi'ite fanatics, backed up by the Syrians. So the U.S. struck back at the Syrian positions and tightened up its military alliance with Israel, Syria's chief regional rival. But ultimately, it is not the Syrians that Reagan's Near East strategy is aimed at — it's the Soviets who stand behind (and beside) them. Revolutionaries cannot be neutral toward the presence of U.S. military personnel in Lebanon. We want them all out, now, dead or alive!

"Frenzy" on Warren Street

(3) The core of Samuels' presentation is the argument that the social-patriotic demand to save the Marines was a "smart" maneuver. But to prove this, he must first attempt to establish that the domestic political situation in the U.S. was so turbulent in the aftermath of the bombing that the question of state power was placed on the agenda. He asserts that "the American people were driven into an anti-government frenzy and outrage." Proof of this "frenzy?" According to the SL one could see it in a few "interviews with Marines, their families, [and] in polls that were taken." That's all! Of course, the surviving Marines and their families are worried about their skins. As for the dip in Reagan's ratings in the polls, well, losing military ventures are never popular. (The converse is also true -- as Reagan's rebound in the wake of the Grenada invasion demonstrated.)

But where is the evidence of the "anti-government frenzy" which supposedly swept America? To our knowledge the "frenzy" seems to have been pretty much confined to Warren Street and its environs. No one else noticed it.

(4) What about the "tactic" of orienting to the Marines in their hour of crisis as they picked through the smoldering remains of their former headquarters looking for bits and pieces of their former comrades? Samuels seeks to alibi this by the abstractly correct observation that one of the preconditions for a successful seizure of state power by the working class is that large sections of the capitalist armed forces must be paralysed or neutralized, if not won to active sympathy with the insurgents. He goes on to point out that one means by which a revolutionary leadership would attempt to accomplish this would be by agitation aimed at turning sections of the plebian ranks against the officer corps.

It is true that in the event of a massive proletarian upsurge, some elements of the Marine Corps might well be open to revolutionary propaganda -- but to orient to them today is worse than a stupidity. In the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, the bulk of the police force went over to the strikers. Should we therefore change our attitude toward the cops? Of course not. The cops are the relatively lightly armed bodies of men who are trained and paid to protect capitalist property at home. The Marines are more heavily armed colonial troops chiefly used to protect American capitalist property overseas. With the regular army they also constitute the capitalists' last line of defense against the working class domestically. (In 1967, for example, the 82nd Airborne was dispatched to

Detroit to impose martial law in the ghetto.) Neither Marines nor cops are part of the working class -- a point which Samuels attempts to get around with all his talk about the "links" they retain to their plebian origins. Both are the sworn enemies of the workers and the oppressed.

The connection, of course, between Samuels' ramblings on tactics for a hypothetical future scenario of social upheaval and the actual situation in the U.S. in October 1983 is provided by the phantom mass "anti-government frenzy and outrage." In order to justify their gutless programmatic betrayal, the SL leaders invoke a fantasy in which their social-patriotic flinch becomes a brilliant tactical maneuver opening the road to proletarian revolution. Do Robertson et al actually believe it? Of course not, they're not stupid. But they presumably hope that some others are.

(5) To explain the disparity between the attitude to the Marines in Lebanon and those in Grenada, Samuels stoops to a kind of crude "lesser-evil" theory of imperialism. The Marines in Grenada, you see, are malignant. They "are the baddest, they're the worstest, they're the personification of evil..and that's why we have [the] slogan 'U.S. Out of Grenada, Dead or Alive!'" The Marines in Lebanon, by contrast, are benign: "they're not fighting at the moment." (Tell that to the Muslim villagers and militiamen who live within range of the Marine encampment and the U.S. flotilla off the coast!) So long as imperialist troops are not engaged in combat ("at the moment"), the SL leadership does not favor attacks on them! Kautsky was more subtle.

The real difference between the SL's positions on Lebanon and Grenada is that Grenada was a cheap victory for Reagan. It didn't cost a lot in terms of casualties and nobody is very worried about what a small socialist propaganda outfit has to say about it one way or the other. So it's easy to be principled on that one. Lebanon is a different story. The demolition of the Marine headquarters was the biggest military blow to U.S. imperialism since Vietnam. And Reagan didn't like it. It might look "unpatriotic" to be seen applauding that action. So the SL leadership, despite all its huffing and puffing about hanging tough in the crunch, flinched and adjusted the program of the organization to make it more palatable to the bourgeoisie. A "profile in cowardice."

Who Are the Marines?

(6) In order to rationalize the SL's benevolent attitude toward the Marines in Lebanon, Samuels tries to blur the class line between the working class and the members of the cops and Marines. He purposely obscures the very important distinction (from the point of view of Bolshevik tactics) between a volunteer for the relatively elite Marine Corps and the "workers in uniform" who make up the bulk of every conscript army. Once again we are dealing with a deliberate attempt to confuse the unsophisticated reader. Who are the Marines?

"Surveys conducted between 1971 and 1973 indicated that among male civilians between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one who wanted to enlist in the military services, about 10 percent indicated that the Marine Corps would be their first choice. In this group, the two positive characteristics for which the Marine Corps rated highest among the services were 'proving manhood' and 'attractive uniform', it ranked third among the services for 'exciting life.' In all other characteristics listed -- 'pay,' 'family living conditions,' 'chance to get ahead,' 'learn useful skills,' 'use skills and abilities,' and 'foreign travel' -- the Marines ranked lowest."

-- Where Does the Marine Corps Go From Here?, Brookings Institute, 1976

Here's how General Robert H. Barrow, former Marine Corps commandant put it:

"I think there are two things that motivate a young man to want to become a marine, both of them probably in his subconscious mind: One is he wants to prove his manliness...Second, the Marine Corps is not a religion, but it's sort of religiouslike. And I believe that self-denial is the basis of all religious life. People really want to believe in something, make a commitment, a sacrifice. So they come to us and they make a sacrifice. They give up all that long hair and their funny clothes and their loud music and their civilian kind of freedom -- to be a marine. They make a commitment."

-- U.S. News and World Report, 10 September 1979

In other words, you've got to be pretty "gung-ho" to join the Marines in the first place. People join the Marines for roughly the same reason that they join a street gang, or the Hells Angels, or the cops -- to be one of a bunch of "tough guys" that go around and blow away other people. Marine recruits do not represent a cross-section of the plebian population of the U.S. They don't even represent a cross-section of those who seek a career in the military. As WV No. 137 noted: "the whole Marine 'esprit de corps' as an elite unit of marauding imperialist killers fosters...racist reactionaries." Consequently they are likely to be among the last of the units of the bourgeois armed forces to disintegrate in the event of a mass political upsurge of the working class.

Samuels' depiction of the typical enlisted Marine as spending just "a few years" in the Corps while retaining his links to the social strata from which he came is simply false. According to Michael Wright (New York Times Magazine, 20 June 1982): "...nearly 80 percent of all eligible Marines who have completed at least two tours of duty have been re-enlisting, as have almost half the young first-termers."

In other words, the Marine Corps is largely composed of "lifers!" In fact the Corps doesn't make it easy to stay in. In order to be able to re-enlist:

"The enlisted marine must have no reenlistment restrictions in his contract and must not show a negative trend in his disciplinary record or have committed any serious offenses. For a first reenlistment, he must not have been convicted of a court-martial offense or have been awarded nonjudicial punishment more than twice. The individual marine must meet Marine Corps appearance and physical standards and must have achieved certain minimum conduct and proficiency marks...Finally, for an individual to qualify for retention in either the Navy or Marine Corps, he must be recommended by his commanding officer.

"In addition, each service has 'up-or-out' promotion criteria that career personnel must meet in order to reenlist. For example, Marine corporals and below may not reenlist for a period resulting in more than ten years of active service. If an individual has not been promoted higher than the rank of corporal after eight years, then he is not eligible for reenlistment. Sergeants, except those who have not yet been considered for promotion, may not reenlist for a period resulting in more than twelve years' total service. Sergeants who have failed promotion twice are not eligible to reenlist without the Marine Corps commandant's approval."

-- H.R. Northrup et al, Black and Other Minority Participation in the All-Volunteer Navy and Marine Corps (1979)

And how to get promoted?

"Because of the importance of commanding in combat -- it is all a part of having your ticket punched, advancing your way up the M.M.'s [Men Marines] career ladder -- there is a discernible yearning among young marines for a chance to mix it up in Nicaragua, Aden, anywhere."

-- Michael Wright, op.cit.

Of course the Marines don't sign up to get blown away -- they're in the business of blowing other people away. The reason that morale began to crack during Vietnam was mostly because they were losing. Thirteen thousand Marines were killed in action in 'Nam. In the post-Vietnam era, the population as whole, perhaps even including a few Marines, is less willing to uncritically accept presidential policies. Revolutionaries must seek to exploit this erosion of bourgeois authority -- but not by cowardly social-patriotic calls for preserving the lives of imperialism's thugs! Communists welcome defeats inflicted upon the bourgeoisie's gunslingers. Only cringing, social-patriotic cretins could even talk about the destruction of the Marines' Beirut headquarters as a "stupid, senseless waste."

It is grotesque and obscene that cde. Samuels and the SL leadership attempt to hide their social-patriotic demand for the preservation of Reagan's trained killers behind cynical talk about Bolshevik tactics and the "road to power." With this betrayal of Leninist principle the SL has taken a big step down the road -- but it's not the road to workers power. It is the road to accommodation with U.S. imperialism.

— reproduced from Bulletin of the External Tendency of the iSt No. 2, January 1984

**WORKERS
VANGUARD**
No. 337 9 September 1983

If the government of the Soviet Union knew that the intruding aircraft was in fact a commercial passenger plane containing 200-plus innocent civilians, despite the potential military damage of such an apparent spying mission, if they deliberately destroyed the airplane and its occupants, then, to paraphrase the French, the act of shooting it down would have been worse than a barbaric atrocity, it would have been an idiocy worthy of the Israelis. But the piecemeal facts and obvious falsifications argue that this was not the case, and something resembling what really might have gone on is rapidly being pieced together internationally.

What are the Americans up to? As a statement Soviet newscasters say they are exposing the lies of the CIA.

TASS

**WORKERS
VANGUARD**
No. 338 23 September 1983

As we wrote last issue: "If the government of the Soviet Union knew that the intruding aircraft was in fact a commercial passenger plane containing 200-plus innocent civilians, despite the potential military damage of such an apparent spying mission, if they deliberately destroyed the airplane and its occupants, then, to paraphrase the French, the act of shooting it down would have been an idiocy worthy of the Israelis. But the piecemeal facts and obvious falsifications argue that this was not the case, and something resembling what really might have gone on is rapidly being pieced together internationally" ("Reagan's Story Stinks!" *WV* No. 337, 9 September). With every passing day, as the government's fabrications are exposed, the truth will unravel and the lies will be exposed.

WV Flinches on 007

A Textbook Example

The first article in *Workers Vanguard* on the Soviet termination of the South Korean 007 spy flight (*WV* No. 337, 9 September) contained a textbook example of flinching on the Russian question. If the Soviets knew that there were 200-plus innocent passengers on board, said *WV*, then "the act of shooting it down would have been worse than a barbaric atrocity" regardless of "the potential military damage of such an apparent spying mission." Trotskyists have a different attitude. We say that defense of the Soviet Union includes defense of Soviet airspace. The loss of innocent civilian life was indeed lamentable, but the only "barbaric atrocity" committed was by the South Korean and American spymasters who used these unfortunate people as their unwitting hostages. The Soviets pointed out that when Hitler launched his "drive to the east," the Nazis would frequently herd civilians in front of their advancing armour. Some of these innocent people were inevitably killed by Russian anti-tank fire. Who was to blame? Same thing.

What is particularly interesting is that by the next issue (23 September), when things had cooled down somewhat and more and more skeptical questions were being asked in the bourgeois press, *WV* reprinted its previous comment minus the phrase about it being "worse than a barbaric atrocity." Was this merely a typo, or was it a clumsy attempt to tart up the historical record? We don't know. In any case, we're still waiting for the corrections column that mentions it.

—reproduced from Bulletin of the External Tendency of the iSt No. 2, January 1984

Challenger's 'Major Malfunction'

No Disaster for the Working Class

The spontaneous abortion of space shuttle Challenger on January 28 was followed by an outpouring of government-prompted, electronically-orchestrated grief. From Pope to Queen, a variety of "world leaders" were quick to convey their speechwriters' expressions of sorrow. Even Kremlin chief Mikhail Gorbachev telegraphed Reagan, "We share your grief at the tragic death of the crew." None of these notables was so impolite as to point to Reagan's fingerprints on the wreckage. Yet White House pressure to get the 25th shuttle mission into orbit — regardless of hazardous weather conditions — in time for Reagan's State of the Union address that evening was plainly the cause of the "disaster." But instead of an upbeat message from on high, the January 28 evening news featured endless replays of Challenger's fiery demise.

The media made much of the "personal tragedies" of the astronauts' families. Meanwhile the good news about the failed mission has been largely ignored, even by the left press. And the good news is that, along with the \$1.5 billion flagship of the Defense Department/NASA shuttle fleet, the explosion destroyed the second unit in a projected four-part Tracking and Data Relay Satellite System (TDRSS).

The Air Force had initially attempted to give the TDRSS project a civilian cover but, as the 8 November 1982 issue of *Aviation Week & Space Technology (AW&ST)* reported, NASA soon decided "to shift the \$2.2-billion program to a total government system with no commercial communications services." It added that the "Defense Dept. could benefit by the switch. It has plans to use TDRSS spacecraft-to-spacecraft relay capability for military programs.... The relay capability of the TDRSS spacecraft eliminates the need for satellite ground stations, allowing near 100% continuous communications contact with orbiting vehicles." The first component of this system (TDRSS-A) was sent aloft aboard Challenger in April 1983. The second TDRSS unit, scheduled for launch in August of that year, has been delayed repeatedly since then.

In 1952 Eisenhower cabinet appointee Charles Wilson summed up the world view of that administration with his immortal observation, "what's good for G.M. is good for the country." The Reaganites have amended that to read: what's good for the war machine is good for the country. *Aviation Week* (3 March) reported that Air Force Under Secretary Edward Aldrich "said Challenger's destruction was tantamount to a national emergency." The February 10 issue reported, "Launch of a second tracking and data relay satellite to replace the one destroyed on Challenger and bring the TDRS system operational is a high priority in all of the manifest options." Indeed, according to the 17 March issue, the TDRSS is the *top* priority and is to be included on the next shuttle launch (currently set for February 1987).



Aldrich testified before a House Science and Technology subcommittee "that the military effect of the Jan. 28 explosion... would be 'relatively minor' if the three remaining shuttles could resume flights within six months" (*New York Times*, 27 February). But no one expects them to be ready to go in anything like that time frame. According to *AW&ST* (17 March) "Resumption of space shuttle launches prior to mid-1987 is unlikely, NASA managers and engineers believe... no managers believed the program will be operational as early as February, 1987."

There is plenty we don't know about imperialist Big Brother TDRSS (and the rest of the military's communications/intelligence satellite network), but it is reasonable to assume that the 28 January "disaster" represented a big setback for the U.S. military and its high-tech plans for war against the USSR. And that is a very good thing.

Spartacist League: Another Crisis, Another Flinch

For the formerly-Trotskyist Spartacist League (SL), flinching at moments of great "national crisis" (i.e., when it really counts) has virtually become a reflex, as their execrable press coverage of the 28 January explosion demonstrates. *Workers Vanguard's* first article ("Challenger Blows Up in Reagan's Face," 14 February) pays scant attention to the destruction of the TDRSS satellite aboard Challenger and ventures timidly, "there may be some small benefit from

the death of these seven people in that it makes a mockery out of Star Wars, where an enormously sophisticated system must work perfectly without testing." This ignores the fact that TDRSS can function independent of the completion of the rest of the Star Wars apparatus. TDRSS-A is working *now*. The long-awaited TDRSS-B would be working in tandem with it to "form a system capable of relaying communications from the shuttle or other spacecraft through 85% of each Earth orbit" (*AW&ST*, 20 January) had shuttle mission 51-L been successful. Surely the fact that it had to be salvaged from the bottom of the Atlantic, instead of circling the globe high over the central Pacific, must also qualify as a "small benefit" for the working class and its allies.

Taking its cue from the bourgeois media's "human interest" smokescreen, *Workers Vanguard* (*WV*) volunteers: "What we feel toward the astronauts is no more and no less than for any people who die in tragic circumstances, such as the nine poor Salvadorans who were killed by a fire in a Washington, D.C. basement apartment two days before." Yet from the press coverage we saw, there can be little doubt that those "nine poor Salvadorans" were refugees from the desperate poverty (and quite possibly the rightist death squads) of their homeland. *WV's* assertion that it feels no more sympathy for such people than for the handful of Reaganauts who perished in an attempt to forge one more link in U.S. imperialism's bid to achieve first-strike capability against the Soviet Union, demonstrates that the ex-Trotskyist Spartacist League is no longer capable of distinguishing the class line.

Who Was Who Aboard Challenger?

Who were the "victims" aboard Challenger? Prominent among them was Air Force lifer Lt. Col. Ellison Onizuka, who was clearly a big shooter in the Star Wars program. Onizuka was a mission specialist on a top-secret January 1985 Defense Department launch. He was identified by *AW&ST* as the man "in charge of the TDRSS deployment" on the 28 January mission. *Time* magazine (10 February) identified Challenger's commanding officer, Francis Scobee, as an aerospace engineer and Air Force pilot who "found his true potential in the skies... [where he] flew on combat missions in Viet Nam."

Another war "hero" and Challenger "victim" was Michael Smith. According to *Time*, Smith won "appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis," and "became a pilot and won a chestful of medals during the Viet Nam War" in the course of flying 225 combat missions. Payload specialist Gregory Jarvis "enlisted in the Air Force in 1969, became a specialist in tactical communications satellites... and rose to the rank of captain."

Ronald McNair, the only black on the shuttle, "helped develop specialized lasers" at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. *Time* quotes former college classmate and black Democratic Party hustler Jesse Jackson as saying McNair saw participation in the space program as "the highest way he could contribute to the system that gave him so much." Judith Resnick was an electrical engineer who "operated the spacecraft's remote-control arm" on a previous shuttle flight in 1984. She must have been aware that she had locked onto the Star Wars program.

Christa McAuliffe, the New Hampshire schoolteacher

who won a national competition of 10,000 teachers to become the "first ordinary citizen in space," probably really thought that she was "reaching for the stars." She was indeed a victim. But the degenerate SL makes no distinction between Star Warrior Onizuka (whom the 28 February *WV* blandly describes as "a Japanese American Buddhist from Hawaii") and public relations hostage McAuliffe.

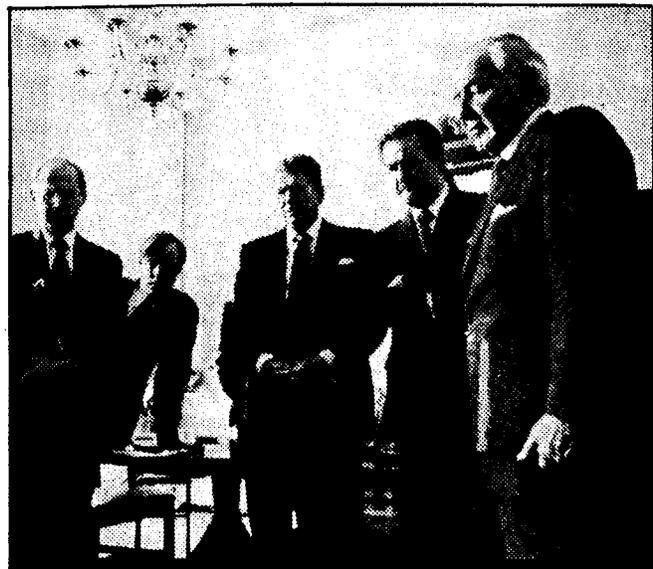
SL's Bogus Amalgam

To further confuse matters *WV* writes, "Those who died [aboard Challenger] were the victims of the U.S. imperialist anti-Soviet war drive, like the 200-plus dead Marines in Beirut or the passengers on the KAL 007 spy plane." What we have here is an attempt to amalgamate three very different situations by a bit of political sleight-of-hand.

The KAL-007 passengers *were* innocent victims. Unlike the "mission specialists" aboard the Challenger, they were sent to their deaths on a provocative and deliberate spy-flight intended to trigger the Soviet air defense network. Despite their posture as defenders of the USSR, in the crunch the Spartacist League flinched. *Workers Vanguard* (9 September 1983) declared that, had the Russians known that there were innocent passengers aboard, then "despite the potential military damage of such an apparent spying mission," shooting down KAL 007 would have been "worse than a barbaric atrocity." The SL defends the Soviet Union as long as there is no heat, but in the midst of an anti-Soviet media-blitz the position is subject to adjustment. So much for "unconditional" defensism!

The flip side of ducking on the Russian question is social patriotism. The 200-plus U.S. Marines who perished in the 1983 barracks bombing in Beirut were imperialist hitmen establishing a beachhead for a U.S. military presence in the Middle East. Revolutionists unconditionally oppose imperialist intervention anywhere in the "third world," and call for the removal of such colonial gendarmes by any means necessary. Not so the Spartacist League, which, in the aftermath of the barracks bombing called for *saving* the survivors! As we pointed out at the time:

Reagan watches Challenger replay on White House TV



PETE SOUSA

"The demolition of the Marine headquarters was the biggest military blow to U.S. imperialism since Vietnam. And Reagan didn't like it. It might look "unpatriotic" to be seen applauding that action. So the SL leadership, despite all its huffing and puffing about hanging tough in the crunch, flinched and adjusted the program of the organization to make it more palatable to the bourgeoisie. A 'profile in cowardice.'

— *Bulletin of the External Tendency of the iSt*, January 1984

The SL sought to alibi its refusal to defend the demolition of the Marine barracks in Lebanon on the grounds that there was no force in Beirut fighting for a "just cause." But the spectacular crash of January 28 demonstrated that even

an outright *accident* can bring a welcome setback for imperialism. Those "revolutionaries" who cannot bring themselves to come out and tell the truth to the masses about such "national tragedies" demonstrate their ideological subservience to their own bourgeoisie.

As for WV's "millions of Americans" who saw the space shuttle's fatal malfunction as "a heart-rending human tragedy," we can only observe that the capitalist mass media is indeed a powerful ideological weapon. Perhaps exposure to the truth will one day teach some of them to greet future setbacks for the imperialist war machine with calls of "Encore"! ●

— reproduced from 1917 No. 2, Summer 1986

Marxism and Bloodthirstiness

U.S. imperialism's trip wires for World War III extend from one end of the globe to the other. Reagan is now engaged in three wars—in Lebanon, El Salvador and Nicaragua—and in the Caribbean the U.S. troops are finishing off the rape of Grenada. American Pershing 2 nuclear missiles have been deployed in Europe, aimed directly at Moscow—at six to eight minutes striking distance. Decaying capitalism is readying to plunge humanity once again into global war, and lurching toward a nuclear holocaust which threatens the extinction of life on this planet.

Revulsion and opposition to the mass slaughter which is endemic to the imperialists' class rule is a central part of the Marxist vision of and struggle for a classless, stateless society. The hideous threat of World War III and the bellicose policies of Washington today engender justified fears and inchoate pacifistic sentiments among the world's masses, both in the Soviet bloc and the capitalist countries, sentiments which can be turned against the imperialist warmakers. The carnage of World War I gave birth to the Russian workers revolution of 1917—because the Bolshevik Party won the workers, peasants and soldiers to revolutionary opposition to their "own" government, and ended Russia's participation in the interimperialist slaughter by replacing the exploiters' state with a government of the working people.

When over 240 U.S. Marines were blown to pieces at the Beirut airport compound in October, the largest number of American troops killed in a single day since the height of the Tet offensive in Vietnam, the American

public reacted with outrage. There were elements of pacifism, isolationism and patriotism, and there was a broad grasp that the Lebanon intervention was senseless. The outrage was mainly directed at the imperialist commander in chief (who immediately launched the racist bully-boy invasion of tiny Grenada for an easy "victory" to distract attention from the debacle in Beirut). To intersect this conjunctural anti-government sentiment evocatively, the Spartacist League raised the slogans "Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive!" and "U.S. Out of Grenada, Dead or Alive!" There were those among our readership who—objecting particularly to the word "alive"—denounced our Lebanon slogan as a "social-patriotic" capitulation to American chauvinism, counterposing the supposedly radical sentiment: "the only good one is a dead one." But far from radical, this vicarious bloodthirstiness (reminiscent of some of the more dim and despicable elements of the old New Left—draft-dodgers turned accountants) challenges a fundamental attitude of Marxism as well as undercutting the central Leninist proletarian strategy to fight against imperialist war. Our critics have nonetheless served a purpose in prompting us to restate some basic Marxist truths, beginning with the fact that Marxists are not bloodthirsty.

We are for the victory of just causes. Necessarily and above all, the centrality of just causes is the shattering of the exploiting and oppressing classes and the victory of socialism. We are socialists not least because we are passionately opposed to war, the gathering together of large numbers of young working-

men to be slaughtered in the interests of the rulers. In this savagely class-divided world, dominated by the mass murderers of My Lai, the struggle for the victory of just causes will have a big physical component. We must stand therefore for the maximum assembling of effective force on the just side, hopefully to demoralize and deter the forces of reaction so that the actual casualties are minimized.

But in Lebanon at the moment, there is little evidence of justice on any side. At bottom, the present fighting there is a continuation of the centuries-old communal/sectarian conflicts between Muslims and Christians, Sunnis and Shi'ites, Druze and others. There is no known force fighting against the U.S. imperialists—they are all jockeying for position with the imperialists. Those whose cause is clearest—the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)—in fact *requested* the intervention of the imperialist troops (a suicidal demand supported by virtually the entire reformist left in this country, and sharply opposed of course by us revolutionists). Now the U.S. is there, having disarmed the PLO and prepared the way for the Israeli/Phalange massacres at Sabra and Shatila. Arafat's organization has split into bloody rivalry, dispersed and evacuated (under the UN flag and Israeli shells). The Israelis precipitously withdrew from Beirut, leaving the Americans to take the casualties. The warring Lebanese communal militias can't tell the difference between the Americans and the Russians and couldn't care less. Where is the just, anti-imperialist side in Lebanon today?

What about the allies of Arafat's

organization? In Tripoli where he was besieged by Syrian-backed PLO dissidents, Arafat allied with the Islamic Unity Movement of Sheikh Shaaban, which last October massacred some 50 members of the Lebanese Communist Party. What about the Shi'ites, who are at the bottom of the social scale in Lebanon, totally deprived of political power although they are the largest group in the country? Shortly before the Israeli invasion of June 1982, the Shi'ite Amal carried out murderous attacks against the PLO in Beirut and southern Lebanon. As for the Syrians, who vaunt their rejection of any negotiations with the Zionists, they made a separate ceasefire with the Israelis early in the 1982 invasion, leaving the Palestinians to fight alone.

To be sure, our Lebanon slogan was highly conjunctural; the situation in the Near East is changing rapidly. The U.S. is already drifting in the direction of a direct conflict with Syria, thanks in good part to the Reaganites' irrational notions of "Soviet surrogateship." Should the U.S. go to war against Syria, a complete reevaluation would be indicated, not least because such a war could become a de facto U.S./USSR conflict in which Marxists would defend the Soviet side.

Lebanon is a quagmire for U.S. imperialism—and this is a good thing. But we do not gloat over those 240 aluminum caskets, those dead young men many of whom were considered expendable in the first place because they were black. We can only despise those who call for the death of American soldiers for the crimes of their rulers. For Marxists there is all the difference between the men in the field and those who sent them there to die. We are not *per se* interested in the annihilation of everyone who is executing Washington's global bloodthirsty policies. Lebanon has aroused strong opposition in the U.S. population; sending in the Marines was a stupid act which could backfire on the U.S. ruling class.

A very different situation obtains in Grenada, Reagan's diversion from the Lebanon disaster. We viewed the U.S. invasion of Grenada in terms comparable to the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon: racist atrocities against another nationality. We had a side in 1982: the defense of the

Palestinians against the attempt to wipe them out. And we had a side in Grenada: with the 700 Cuban construction workers who resisted the Yankee invaders. It took 6,000 U.S. troops to "take" Grenada in the face of the Cubans' heroic self-defense, and most of the Cubans were over 40 years old! The same issue of *Workers Vanguard* which our critics believe marks our decisive capitulation to "social-patriotism" hailed the Cuban fighters who—unlike anyone in Lebanon today—fought the main enemy, U.S. imperialism. In Grenada, we had a side, and our call was "U.S. Out, Dead or Alive!"

And in Vietnam! The side of justice there was unambiguously that of the National Liberation Front (NLF)/North Vietnamese forces against U.S. imperialism. At stake were the national rights of the Vietnamese people and the social revolution whose victory was the only way to definitively drive out colonialism. Our call for "Victory to the Vietnamese Revolution!" was not bloodymindedness but a recognition of what was necessary to bring peace to Vietnam after three decades of imperialist war. In Lebanon, it is precisely the question of social revolution, or even national liberation, that is missing.

The flip side of the dimwitted New Left bloodlust exemplified by the SDS Weathermen was the Socialist Workers Party's Vietnam slogan, "Bring Our Boys Home Now!" Tailored to appeal to liberal defeatism within sections of the bourgeoisie, the slogan was a class betrayal precisely because the international proletariat had a side in Vietnam—"our" boys were the NLF/North Vietnamese. There were two ways the Americans could come home: withdrawal or in body bags. A common thread runs through the SWP's social-democratic slogan and the New Leftist calls for exterminating the Yankee pigs—both despair of mobilizing the proletariat to wage class struggle against imperialist war, and both renounce appealing to the ranks of the army along class lines.

Imperialism's hemorrhaging in Vietnam and the consequences of its defeat—the profound demoralization of the U.S. armed forces, the convulsions throughout American society, the fear of "another Viet-

nam" which has stayed the hand of imperialism—were good things from the standpoint of the world's toiling masses. The "Vietnam syndrome" here at home provided a breathing space for national liberation struggles such as those in the former Portuguese colonies of southern Africa, tending to prevent a direct American intervention into Angola in 1975-76. It has inhibited Reagan thus far from trying a wholesale assault with U.S. troops against the Nicaraguan regime and the Salvadoran leftist insurgents. But we do not gloat over the deaths of rank-and-file U.S. soldiers. Among the GIs and Marines who were sent to Vietnam were to be found, as the losing war dragged on, some of the angriest, most bitter and most important opponents of the government's war. Unlike the New Left radicals who went, without blinking an eye, from counseling draftees and giving GIs flowers to glorifying their being blown to bits, we sought to do Marxist propaganda work among the American troops. We said that anti-war youth if drafted should seek to educate their class brothers in the army about the imperialist character of the war and their own interest in opposing it.

The global conflict between the antiquated imperialist order and the emancipation of the proletariat does not reduce itself to a division between "good" and "bad" peoples. In battles between just and unjust causes, Marxists have a side but nevertheless do not propose as our program the extermination of all those sent to fight for the wrong side (a program which, if carried out, would long ago have done away with the proletariat of most of the Western capitalist nations). In wars where no side represents an advance for elementary justice, we stand for revolutionary defeatism on both sides. Consider, in addition to Lebanon, the Iran-Iraq war. Is it "social-patriotic" to advise the Iranian and Iraqi troops not to slaughter each other for their respective regimes, to turn the guns around and go home? The squalid Falklands/Malvinas war was another such case. Neither the Argentine nor the British working masses had anything to gain from the victory of their "own" murderous rulers in the Falklands; they only stood to lose their

lives. (In fact, Argentina's defeat led straight to the downfall of the military regime; Britain's victory led to the re-election of Margaret Thatcher.) Those who want bloodthirstiness must look to Thatcher, who ordered the gratuitous sinking of the Argentine cruiser *Belgrano*, taking the lives of more than 320 young men in the icy waters of the South Atlantic.

From Verdun to Hiroshima, the imperialists wage their barbaric, cyclical wars for profit, turning entire generations into cannon fodder. Bukharin wrote about the hideous carnage of the first World War:

"The leading characteristic of the war was that it was murderous to an unparalleled degree. The levying of troops advanced with giant strides. The proletariat was positively decimated on the battlefields. The reports show that down to March, 1917, the number of dead, wounded, and missing totalled 25 millions; by 1 January, 1918, the number of the killed had been approximately 8 millions. If we assume the average weight of a soldier to [be] 150 lb., this means that between 1 August 1914, and 1 January 1918, the capitalists had brought to market twelve hundred million pounds of putrid human flesh."

—*The ABC of Communism*

Or as Rosa Luxemburg put it in her *Junius Pamphlet* (1916):

"Dividends are rising—proletarians falling; and with each one there sinks a fighter of the future, a soldier of the revolution, a savior of humanity from the yoke of capitalism, into the grave."

An end to this slaughter is the goal of Marxist revolutionists. And we hope to put an end to the bourgeoisie's rule with as little bloodshed as possible. We wish we could be pacifists, but we can't—the old social order does not give way to the new in a peaceful and orderly fashion. Isaac Deutscher noted that, "In embracing the vision of a nonviolent society, Marxism... has gone further and deeper than any pacifist preachers of nonviolence have ever done. Why? Because Marxism laid bare the roots of violence in our society, which the others have not done" ("Marxism and Nonviolence," 1966).

Certainly, the Russian Revolution was a nearly bloodless event, carried out, Deutscher writes, "in such a way that, according to all the

hostile eyewitnesses (such as the Western ambassadors who were then in Petrograd), the total number of victims on all sides was ten." It was when the tsarist generals backed by 13 imperialist armies began the Civil War that the killing really began. In sheer arms, the Bolsheviks were infinitely inferior to the imperialist powers who intervened to crush the revolution along with the *contras* of the day, the White Army. The Bolsheviks emerged victorious; Deutscher wrote: "They agitated, they appealed to the consciousness of the soldiers, of the workers in uniform in those interventionist armies. The French navy, sent to suppress the revolution, rose in mutiny in Odessa and refused to fight against the Bolsheviks..."

While the bourgeoisie can only maintain its rule over the laboring majority through the massive use of intimidation, force and violence, for Marxists violence is a necessary *evil*—one imposed upon the defense of the struggle for socialism by the bloody-mindedness of the exploiting class in power. After the Cuban people defeated the CIA's Bay of Pigs invaders, the Castro regime traded the captured *gusanos* for needed medical supplies. In El Salvador, the leftist insurgents have followed a policy of turning captured enemy soldiers over to the Red Cross unharmed—an effective incentive to mass desertion from the junta's army. Contrast this with the fascistic death squads who operate against the populace under the principle of "the only good one is a dead one." The principal weapon in the proletariat's arsenal is not force *per se*, but the ability to undermine the capitalist regiments by appealing to common class interests. Even in defense of just causes, Marxists are guided by a rational calculus and not by bloodlust.

There are situations in which insufficient force used initially leads to greater bloodshed ultimately. Had the Nicaraguan Sandinistas beheaded the counterrevolutionary pro-*Somocista* organizations, e.g., by trials of Somoza's torturers by revolutionary tribunals, the Nicaraguan masses today would not be forced to fight and die against the *contra* invaders. We raise the

slogan "Kill the Invaders!" not because we want to see a lot of dead bodies lying around, but because if every little band the CIA sends over is wiped out, and the counterrevolutionary capitalist "fifth column" in Nicaragua is expropriated as a class and its power broken, bloodshed will be minimized, while conciliation strengthens the hand of the U.S.-backed *contras* who aim to drown in blood the possibility of socialist revolutionary development in Nicaragua.

Or consider the U.S.' Korean Air Lines Flight 007 Cold War provocation against the Soviet Union last summer, a grotesque example of the ruling class's willingness to cynically squander human life. The Soviet military took the only course of defensive action possible, under the circumstances—i.e., given the refusal of the jet to communicate, the Russians were unable to identify it while at the same time a U.S. spy plane was clearly in contact with it. But we do not "hail" the shooting down of 200-plus innocent civilians; we solidarize with the TASS statement of 2 September 1983:

"Tass is authorized to state that in the leading circles of the Soviet Union regret is expressed over the loss of human life and at the same time a resolute condemnation of those who consciously or as a result of criminal disregard have allowed the death of people and are now trying to use this occurrence for unseemly political aims."

Marxists do not support nor advocate the killing of innocent civilians—be it on board KAL 007, an Israeli bus in Jerusalem, a pub in Northern Ireland. With KAL, the fact is that the Soviets did not knowingly down a civilian passenger jet. Had they done so, we said, it would have been worse than a barbaric atrocity, it would have been an idiocy worthy of the Israelis. This seemingly uncontentious position against wanton bloodshed provoked charges of "softness" from critics whose vicarious bloodthirstiness tends to be directly proportional to the distance from their own appetites. From a safe distance, the petty-bourgeois radicals embrace the "good" peoples (if necessary first inventing them, as in Lebanon today) and for the "bad," well, the only good one is a dead one.

Reactionary in itself, such an attitude—completely divorced as it is from Marxist class analysis—necessarily gives way to anti-communist public opinion. Thus we see many of yesterday's "radicals" joining up ideologically with U.S. imperialism over the plight of "poor little Afghanistan" and the crushing of counter-revolutionary Polish Solidarność. (In Afghanistan, the "freedom fighters" are fanatical Islamic defenders of the bride price, while the "evil superpower" defends the rights of the Afghan people to emerge from the ninth century, including the right of women to learn to read. In Poland, "underdog" Lech Walesa and Solidarność represent the Vatican, Western bankers and the CIA in league against the Polish Stalinist bureaucracy, threatening a bloody return to capitalist "democracy," i.e., wage

slavery and NATO missiles.)

On another level, there is the conflict between the nationalist/Stalinist and the Trotskyist approaches to the anti-Nazi resistance during World War II. The policy of the French Resistance was to attack lone German privates standing out on lonely streets at night trying to pick up girls; a typical "tactic" was to cut off their genitals and stuff them in their mouths. Predictably, this didn't lead to too many German recruits to the cause of the Resistance. The French Trotskyists sought to appeal to the class consciousness of the German soldiers (many of whose parents were Communists and Social Democrats), carrying out at great cost a policy of fraternization. Around the publication of *Arbeiter und Soldat* ("Worker and Soldier"), a clandestine newspaper for German class-

conscious soldiers, they formed a Trotskyist secret cell within the German navy at Brest.

Today there are a half a million young men in the Bundeswehr (West German army) and, as in the past, they are likely to be sent off to fight for unjust causes. We would work for their defeat, but that does not mean that we propose the extermination of every German worker in uniform. We seek rather the bursting asunder *from within*, i.e., from below, of the imperialist armed forces as part of the struggle to realize comrade Lenin's profoundly humanist view of the "socialist system of society, which, by abolishing the division of mankind into classes, by abolishing all exploitation of man by man, and of one nation by other nations, will inevitably abolish all possibility of war." ■

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-- "Facing the Reagan Years," Workers Vanguard No. 273, 30 January 1981
(quoted in "Towards Revolutionary Conjunction")

These remarks from a public speech by comrade George Foster of the Spartacist League Central Committee helped to arm our party during the "Reagan years." If during this period the Bolshevik Tendency (formerly External Tendency) consolidated as a walking "horrible example" of what it means to flinch from the dangers and opportunities presented in the Reagan years, our party -- by looking for opportunities to advance our revolutionary program, centrally around defense of the USSR and around the struggle for black freedom -- has emerged in a good position to face the opening of a new political period.

Our party's performance during the Reagan years, the new tasks confronting us, and a critical evaluation of the Spartacist League as we prepare to face them, are the subject of "Toward Revolutionary Conjunction," the resolution debated and adopted by the Eighth National Conference of the Spartacist League/U.S. in September 1987. Following the conference, the document was made available for sale to the public.

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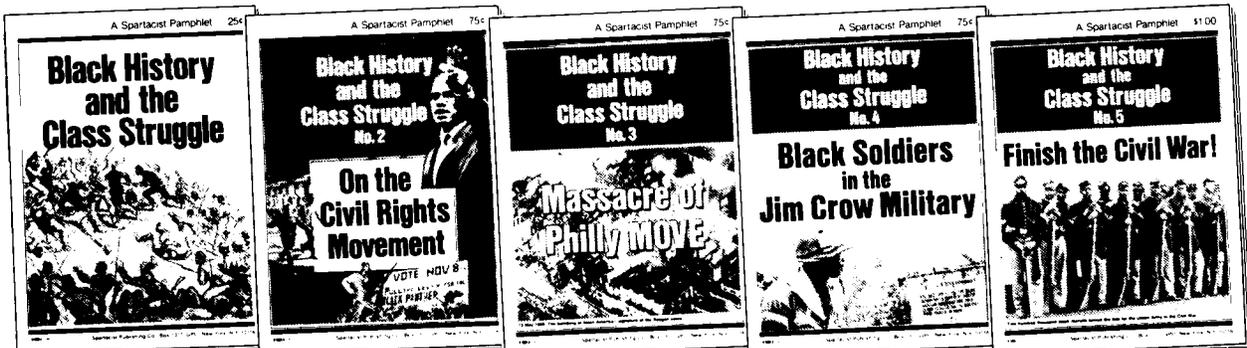
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