
Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League

—a bulletin series of opponent material

NUMBER 6

From Malice to Provocation

Introduction

The Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter:

“Bundestag Election '90—What Do the Others Stand For?:
The SpAD—Provocateurs Against the Fourth International,”
translated from *Neue Arbeiterpresse* No. 633, 23 November 1990

The Gruppe Spartakus:

“Statement of the Gruppe Spartakus on the Bundestag Elections:
No Vote to the SPD/No Vote to the PDS—Critical Support to the SpAD,”
translated from a leaflet by the Gruppe Spartakus, German section
of the International Bolshevik Tendency, 17 November 1990

A Letter on “Spartacism”:

Typescript of a letter by Barry Weisleder, longtime spokesman for the
United Secretariat in Canada, 15 November 1990

Introduction

Since 1975, the Spartacist League has published several bulletins entitled “Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League,” containing material critical of the SL written by opponent organizations. Through this series we have sought to make available, to our members and others interested in our organization, representative arguments against our politics, particularly by left-sounding centrists and critics.

In keeping with this tradition, our comrades of the Spartacist League/Britain and the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group recently reprinted two lengthy polemics by the Irish Workers Group—affiliates of the eminently centrist Workers Power organization in Britain—in their first “Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacists” bulletin. In the face of the demise of Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe and its disintegration in the Soviet Union—where the alternatives of bloody capitalist counterrevolution or proletarian political revolution are posed pointblank—Workers Power is having some difficulty squaring its nominal position of Soviet defensism with its concrete positions of siding with the forces for capitalist restoration. Their way of dealing with this contradiction is to rave on about Spartacist “Stalinophilia.”

Here we are reprinting two pieces: the first is an article by the Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter (BSA) entitled “The SpAD—Provocateurs Against the Fourth International,” and the second is the “Statement of the Gruppe Spartakus on the Bundestag Elections.” The BSA is the German affiliate of David North’s “International Committee of the Fourth International”—one of the decomposition products of the now infamous Gerry Healy’s “international” organization of the same name. The Gruppe Spartakus is the German branch of the recently founded “International Bolshevik Tendency”—a collection of miscellaneous elements from North America to New Zealand, most of whom quit our organization a decade ago with the onset of Cold War II. (The first issue of the Bolshevik Tendency’s newspaper *1917* is available as issue No. 4 of this series and other BT material is reprinted in “Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League” No. 5.)

Together with Workers Power, the Gruppe Spartakus and the BSA have a one-sided understanding of the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy. One of the most chemically pure renditions of this was provided by yet another spin-off from Healy’s organization, Cliff Slaughter’s “Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International” (although, unlike the BSA, the Slaughterites seem to be more purely guided by political program rather than by simple organizational pathology). In the introduction to the memoirs of longtime German Trotskyist Oskar Hippe, a representative of Slaughter’s organization writes that:

“The so-called theory of the dual nature of Stalinism, which claims that under certain conditions the Stalinist bureaucracy can play a revolutionary role, had to be exposed. Without understanding that Stalinism is counter-revolutionary through and through, the agent of imperialism in the working-class movement internationally, the Fourth International cannot be rebuilt.”

This view was reiterated by Slaughterite leader Simon Pirani in a letter to the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*

(February 1991), where he rails against United Secretariat leader Ernest Mandel’s “conception that Stalinism has a ‘dual nature’.” Of course, Mandel’s conception of the “dual nature” of Stalinism is invested with, and determined by, his own opportunist appetites. In the 1950s, when Mandel was looking to pressure the Stalinists into playing an “objectively revolutionary role,” he glorified the ascension to power of “reform” Stalinists like Gomulka in Poland. In the early 1980s, when Mandel was tailing Cold War social democrats in Europe, he denounced our opposition to Solidarność’ counterrevolution as a “capitulation to Stalinism.”

As opposed to Trotsky’s analysis of the bureaucracy as a brittle, *contradictory* and bonapartist caste, whose rule rests on and reflects different social forces, these organizations (despite their nominal claim to be Trotskyist) share the “third camp” view of the Stalinist regimes as completely hardened, monolithic and autonomous powers. Another of this ilk of self-proclaimed “Trotskyist” organizations, largely coming out of Latin America, are the followers of the late Argentine adventurer Nahuel Moreno.

The monocular view of the Stalinist bureaucracy as “counterrevolutionary through and through” has unobtrusively led all of these organizations to be incapable of distinguishing the difference between, for example, the Red Army and the troops of tsarist Russia. Correspondingly, they necessarily equate our opposition to capitalist counterrevolution in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union with being apologists for the corrupt and bureaucratic Stalinist misrulers.

Nonetheless, despite the rather hysterical quality and dishonesty of Workers Power’s polemics against us on this question, the material by the BSA and the German BT which we are reprinting here stands on a *completely different plane*—as do the organizations which wrote them. To capture their sinister quality we considered “Hate Trotskyism, Destroy the Spartacist League” might be a more appropriate title.

Some Background

Historically it has not been our practice to write lengthy introductions to these bulletins but rather to let the material speak for itself. For example, in issue No. 1 of this series we reprinted a document entitled “Spartacist League: Anatomy of a Sect” which was published by some of the more left-wing followers of Ernest Mandel’s United Secretariat in North America in the early 1970s. Certainly, their attempt to portray our organization as sectarian, abstentionist and Stalinophobic required no small amount of falsification. Nonetheless, the interested reader would be able to judge politically where this particular collection of Mandelites was coming from in its opposition to our political views.

This is not the case with the Gruppe Spartakus or the BSA. Where they are coming from is obscure to say the least and certainly cannot be judged by what they write or say.

The BSA and its international organization are

shameless political bandits who have taken widely divergent political positions to serve their own convenient and grotesque opportunistic appetites. Their unfathomable cynicism makes them capable of saying anything—including at times, when it suits their purpose, some very orthodox-sounding things.

The Gruppe Spartakus and its "International Bolshevik Tendency" often put forward blurred carbon copies of our political positions. At the same time, for close to ten years now, they have pursued a relentless and hostile fixation with our organization. As we observed in an article entitled "What Makes the BT Run?" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 428, 15 May 1987):

"Ex-members of the socialist movement do sometimes bear malice toward the organizations that 'failed' them. But people who voluntarily leave even very bad organizations normally find that their grievances recede as they go on with their lives. Hostility doesn't make a program and ex-membership in a party doesn't provide a sufficient reason for publishing a newspaper or crossing North America and Europe year after year seeking others similarly inclined."

The material from the BSA and the Gruppe Spartakus that we are reprinting here bears little resemblance to anything that could be considered a political polemic. Nonetheless we are publishing them because they are representative of the two organizations. To demonstrate that we offer the reader the following guide.

The BSA

The BSA's wild-eyed charges against the Spartakist-*Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands* (SpAD) and the International

Communist League (ICL) have more in common with the ravings of Vyshinsky against "Trotskyites" at the Moscow Trials than with a political debate, even of the most heated nature. The underlying intent of violence and repression is scarcely veiled.

The SpAD is known as the only organization that forthrightly fought against the capitalist reunification of Germany and which relentlessly exposed the West German Social Democrats, under the leadership of Oscar Lafontaine, as the "Trojan horse" for imperialist *Anschluss* of the DDR. The BSA vituperates that the "hysterical language of the SpAD is directed at people who are in a mental state similar to that of schizophrenic would-be assassin of Lafontaine, Adelheid Streidel."

This is an open appeal for naked and bloody state violence against our organization. The imperialist rulers come after those whom they perceive as a threat to the lives of heads of state or politicians, with drawn guns. The BSA signals the agencies of Helmut Kohl's Fourth Reich, which is currently engaged in a massive witchhunt against "Communists" and "terrorists," that they should deal with us accordingly, i.e., shoot first and ask questions later.

The same sinister quality underlies the BSA's allegation that the SpAD is known as the "Stasi" party. In the current climate, invoking the name of the Stasi, the former security police of the DDR, is the code word for terror attacks by the police, frenzied petty-bourgeois groups and fascist skinheads. But then in the circles the BSA's politics would lead them to travel in, we probably are known as the "Stasi" party.

"Stasi" was the charge right-wing demonstrators in Leipzig, who marched under "Germany, One Fatherland" banners, hurled against anyone who opposed capitalist reunification. Like the BSA, they also were offended by references to Helmut Kohl's BRD regime, the legal successor state to Hitler's Third Reich, as the "Fourth Reich."

Last January, following the mass 250,000-strong mobilization at Treptow Park to protest the fascist desecration of a monument to the Red Army fighters who fell in battle to smash Hitler's Nazis, the West German imperialists and their Social Democratic front men grotesquely tried to portray the fascist provocations as a Stasi "trick." The BSA howled along with them, denouncing the anti-fascist mobilization at Treptow as a ruse by the disintegrating Stalinists "to rescue and re-establish the Stalinist state apparatus." In the face of this mass pro-Soviet demonstration the imperialists and the Social Democrats turned up the heat in their campaign to stampede the DDR into capitalist reunification.

Now "Stasi" is the rallying cry for a vicious "anti-Stalinist" red-hunt which is aimed at anyone who would resist the Fourth Reich's drive to turn the ex-DDR into a low-wage labor ghetto and a launching pad for its *Drang nach Osten* (drive to the east). The BSA makes common cause with the witchhunters. It doesn't bother them. In 1979, their "international" tendency extolled the murder of 21 Iraqi CPers by Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime as a blow against "counterrevolutionary Stalinism." Heralding the murder of Communist worker militants drew big dividends for the Healyites, who raked in

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of Its Opponents on the Left**

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Hate the
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**Hate Trotskyism,
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—a bulletin series of opponent material

NUMBER 1

**Workers Power and the
Irish Workers Group**

- *Socialism and Stalinism: The Politics of the Spartacists*
192 pages February 1983
- *The Spartacist: A Poisoned Well*
160 pages 11 October 1983
- *Yankee CDRs: The Struggle of State Capitalism*
Workers Number no 10 September 1983
- *Ball-men: nuclear nationalism*
- *Workers Power: Right Turn on East Germany*
Workers Number no 112 December 1983
- *The Substitutio effect: anti-system forces have to stop*
- *Workers Power caught with Russian tactics, Thatcher's occult*
Workers Number no 116 September 1983
- *The Workers Power revival of "Trotskyism"*
- *Turning on the Substitutio effect*
Workers Number no 117 October 1983

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millions in pounds sterling for their criminal services on behalf of various oil-rich Middle East dictators.

The SpAD and the ICL are simply the surrogate for the BSA's hatred of the Soviet Union (which is the only consistent position this outfit has ever had). And it is not just our organization which has occupied this position: in 1983, the British Workers Revolutionary Party, then the leading light of the BSA's International, raked British miners union leader Arthur Scargill over the coals for his denunciation of Polish Solidarność as an "anti-socialist organization."

As the battle lines were being drawn for the 1984-85 British miners strike, the WRP featured an article in their press screaming for Scargill's blood for his opposition to Walesa's company union. This "exposé" was timed for maximum coverage in the labor-hating capitalist press so that it could be wielded by the Cold War British labor tops to redbait Scargill and attempt to isolate the militant miners union on the eve of their strike—a crucial class battle which polarized British society.

The miners strike was knifed by the rest of the trade-union bureaucrats and Neil Kinnock's Labour Party. Lech Walesa's Solidarność, whose cause the Healyites served on behalf of Margaret Thatcher and her labor lieutenants against desperate striking workers, is bleeding the Polish proletariat white on behalf of the International Monetary Fund.

In 1978 the BSA wrote a leaflet championing the Ayatollah Khomeini's viciously anti-communist "Islamic revolution." Here they called SL/U.S. National Chairman Jim Robertson "the main spokesman for the national interests of the American bourgeoisie" because we opposed Khomeini's mullahs. They have called us "provocateurs in the service of Stalinism" for hailing the intervention of Soviet troops in Afghanistan against the CIA's reactionary Islamic "freedom fighters."

Now the BSA writes that the "Spartacist League and its German offshoot the SpAD are the consummate political expression" of the diseased "petty-bourgeois protest movement of the 1960s" in the United States. Obviously the New Leftovers and rad-libs, who have resorted to slanders, goon squads and bringing in the capitalist cops to silence our politics, don't have the same appreciation of our organization.

But words are meaningless to the BSA and its international organization, except insofar as they suit their own sinister purpose and advantage. Devoid of any relation to proletarian morality or the class struggle, they are capable of saying and doing anything—and they have.

"Security and the Fourth International"

You don't just have to take our word for it. Take a look at "Security and the Fourth International," which was co-authored by the BSA's current international *líder máximo* David North, for a flavor of the psychotic ravings of this outfit. According to this demented smear job the Socialist Workers Party, the eccentric reformist shell of the onetime Trotskyist party in the U.S., is controlled and run by police agents. The "proof"? The core of the current leadership all attended the same midwestern college in the U.S.!

As the most recent installment of this vendetta the



Workers Press



Workers Vanguard

David North (right), current Healyite *líder máximo*, denounces all of his former masters as total renegades. Gerry Healy, Tim Wohlforth (top), Michael Banda, Cliff Slaughter (bottom).



Bulletin



Bulletin



Bulletin

Northites waged an international campaign on behalf of the capitalist prosecution of a young SWP leader, Mark Curtis, who is now in jail on charges carrying a 25-year sentence. But why would the cops jail one of their own agents?

If we were to use the WL's own methodology, we could observe that North himself got his education at an elite all-male college on the East Coast. Others in the leadership of North's American Workers League are the products of postgraduate Slavic departments at Ivy League universities where the CIA does its heaviest recruiting. To apply their own yardstick for measuring "police agents," what does that make the Workers League?

While every one of Healy's other former lieutenants has denounced "Security and the Fourth International" as a gigantic fraud, North uniquely stands by every lie while inventing more. It is one of the essential planks of Healyite internal life. Together with working the membership to death and telling them that dialectical materialism was unknowable except as explained by the great leader,

“Security” was designed to keep the membership scared witless over who would be uncovered by the leaders as a “police agent.”

At the same time it was wielded by the leaders to prove that their organization was invincible to police penetration because “they” could detect any agent. But now the British Northites are demanding the “exposure of police agents” who were alleged by Labour MP Ken Livingstone to have destroyed Healy’s WRP! Livingstone has written that the WRP was penetrated by MI5 and suggests that an MI5 agent was a “high ranking member of the leadership” who wreaked “havoc under cover of traditional left rhetoric.”

In a letter to Livingstone, British Northite leader Dave Hyland demands that Livingstone “name that leader,” arguing that until he does “former leaders of the pre-split Workers Revolutionary Party will be under a cloud of suspicion.” Suspicion! The Northites have denounced every other former leader of their organization—Tim Wohlforth, Cliff Slaughter, Michael Banda and even Healy himself—as complete renegades. An organization which simultaneously proclaims that it has always been right while denouncing *all* of its former leaders as traitors ought to give one pause.

The Gruppe Spartakus

The “Statement of the Gruppe Spartakus on the Bundestag Elections” seems to take a different approach to our organization. It is entitled “No Vote to the SPD/ No Vote to the PDS—Critical Electoral Support to the SpAD.” One paragraph is spent explaining why the Gruppe Spartakus (GS) is not voting for the Social Democrats in the SPD or the social-democratic remnants of the former Stalinist regime of the DDR in the PDS.

Then under the heading “Why Vote for the Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SpAD)?” it devotes two hostile pages to our organization. Starting with the statement, “Many militant workers and leftists rightly despise the SpAD,” GS goes on to argue why we *should* be hated.

Under the cover of calling for a vote to SpAD candidates in the December 1990 Bundestag elections, they “warn against the illusion that this sectarian, pseudo-Trotskyist group, bureaucratically degenerated and deformed to the highest degree, can play any role whatsoever in working-class struggles.” On the contrary, GS declares that we are an “obstacle to the building of the revolutionary, Trotskyist workers party.”

Why would anyone call for a vote to such an organization? That, gentle reader, is the point. The Gruppe Spartakus’ call for “critical support” to the SpAD is a fake, a mere launching pad for pursuing their singleminded obsession with our destruction.

The Gruppe Spartakus, formerly the Gruppe IV Internationale (GIVI), is part of the so-called “International Bolshevik Tendency.” Most of the leaders and members of this “tendency” are embittered ex-members of our organization who individually backed out of membership in the early 1980s at the beginning of the “Reagan years.” Since then they have continued to whine that they were ruthlessly purged as “potential internal opponents.” The latter is a damaging admission which says more about the BT than it does about us.

What issues were they opponents on? None of them ever tried to exercise any factional rights. Nothing stood in their way. No other organization has constitutionally enshrined rights for factions to match those of the Spartacist League. Self-admittedly they had political differences which they never fought out. These centered on their cowardice in the face of our hard-edged defense of the Soviet Union against the war-crazed imperialists—particularly our support for the Red Army intervention in Afghanistan and our call to “Stop Solidarność Counterrevolution!”

Until last summer, the GIVIs and the North American-centered Bolshevik Tendency maintained separate organizations. Although they could always be counted on to act in concert when it came to slanders and provocations against our organization, whatever their political differences were remained an internal secret. And they still remain totally obscure, as does the question of how they were resolved leading to the present “regroupment.”

In its newspaper *1917* the BT writes that it was our intervention into the events in the DDR following the collapse of the former Stalinist regime that convinced the GIVI “that the ICL could not be considered a revolutionary organization, but rather an obstacle to revolution.” But if we are what they say we are, how then does one explain that the GIVI recently changed its name to one which is a parody of the name that our organization is so widely known by in East Germany?

We *massively* intervened into the events in the DDR last year under the name of the Spartakist-Gruppen. We launched the Treptow demonstration, we issued a very frequent press and distributed millions of pieces of Trotskyist literature in the name of the Trotskistische Liga Deutschlands and the Spartakist-Gruppen (the TLD and SG subsequently forming the SpAD). Now following their fusion with the BT and an outfit in New Zealand called the Permanent Revolution Group, the GIVIs have rechristened themselves the Gruppe Spartakus. Why would they take the name of an organization they claim is so “rightly” despised by “militant workers” and whose politics and practices they denounce as an “obstacle to revolution,” i.e., counterrevolutionary?

Liars, Thieves and Renegades

Obviously the BT doesn’t believe its own lies. Putting forward a parody of our positions, while staging provocations and retailing slanders designed to set us up for repression, has been the name of the game for this outfit from the get-go. To cover their own cowardly departure from our organization, they have invented lurid tales of Spartacist “bureaucratism” and “degeneracy.” In its statement the Gruppe Spartakus writes that: “Many of its newly acquired members, who were attracted by the SpAD’s revolutionary affectations, have been spat out because of the development of political differences, or repelled by the undemocratic and oppressive internal life....”

Of course, the Gruppe Spartakus has had intimate contact with said “newly acquired members.” Let’s take a look at the people they are referring to here. On the eve of the March elections in the DDR, a couple of guys, together with a few of their friends and relatives, backed



Spartacist



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Spartacist Canada

The BT, an international rogues' gallery. Top: Bill Logan, Howard Keylor, Henning and Rolf. Bottom: Fred Ferguson, Ursula Jensen, Tom Riley.

out of the SpAD. They took with them various assets, including a car, money, mail, a tape recorder and books. Renaming themselves the SpAD/L (which they claimed stood for Leninist) they showed their profound political "differences" with the SpAD by filing completely identical organizational rules and political program with the former DDR government!

As we noted in an article entitled "They Stole the Wrong Car," which was printed in the SpAD's *Arbeiterpressekorrespondenz* (No. 28, 20 March 1990):

"Stealing from Trotskyists while pretending to be Trotskyists themselves will assist their careers neither as ostensible leftists nor as thieves, especially when they will have to compete with all the other hustlers in a reunified capitalist Germany."

But it certainly was the ticket for having warm relations with like-minded elements in the GIVI.

Celebrating May Day last year in West Berlin, the GIVI and this crew of SpAD ex-members (which by then was going under the name of the Leninist-Trotskyist Party/DDR) issued a joint statement entitled *Iskra Arbeiterkorrespondenz Bulletin* (sound familiar?). A bare three weeks later, the GIVI had to issue a "revision" of this document.

At the June Lutte Ouvrière fête in Paris, the GIVI circulated a letter they had written to the Leninist-Trotskyist Party entitled "One Step Forward—Two Steps Back." Here the GIVI "breaks all relations with the LTP," declaring the "LTP has not stood firm against the pressure of the imperialist *Anschluss* policy—principles of the revolution were sold for a contemptible petty-bourgeois project"! Apparently this enterprise was "a petty capitalist publishing house independent of the

party" in which "reportedly a lot of party money is involved." The purpose seems to have been to further the production of a "'working people's newspaper'... adapted to the most backward sectors of the DDR working class."

In their letter to the LTP, the GIVI makes clear what attracted them to these elements when they write: "The stand taken for workers democracy against the bureaucratic Robertson regime, your subsequent rightful actions against the ICL slanders—these were your only connection to Trotskyism." For the Gruppe Spartakus, stealing from our organization, taking our post office box, our name (among other things), and deliberately trying to confuse people by putting forward a forgery of our program on the eve of the March 18 elections, while denying they had stolen anything and claiming they left for "political" reasons, were evidence of healthy political motion or at least a "connection to Trotskyism."

But soon the GIVIs were whining about the "bureaucratic methods" of the LTP because the LTP had expelled one of its two founding honchos for his "Stalinist conduct and his policies." This is the only one of the lot that the Gruppe Spartakus can still claim as one of its own.

Talk about "no honor among thieves"—these guys give it a whole new meaning. The North American BT has collected together similar types—the most hostile, embittered ex-members and elements expelled from our organization for assorted grotesque violations of proletarian morality. Wailing against Spartacist "degeneracy," the BT has attracted some genuine items. Now the foundation stone for them declaring themselves to be the "International Bolshevik Tendency" is their regroupment with Bill Logan's Permanent Revolution Group in New Zealand.

Bill Logan was expelled from our organization, following an extensive trial at our 1979 international conference, as "a proven, massive liar and a sexual sociopath who manipulated the private lives of comrades for reasons of power politics and his own aberrant appetites and compulsions in the guise of Marxism." The charges were based on the painful testimony of scores of comrades, particularly from our Australian section, where Logan had served for years as the national chairman.

The judgment of our International Control Commission was that Logan's crimes, not only against communist morality but against elementary human decency, made him unfit for membership in any working-class organization. But the BT has happily embraced this monster as a "victim" of a "sordid frame-up"—in which they, as members at the time, self-admittedly participated on the basis of their own professed belief in "the substance of the charges against Logan"!

Even to try to imagine what the "internal life" is like in the "International Bolshevik Tendency" is enough to make one's skin crawl.

Stalinophobic or Stalinophilic?

As comic relief, in this bulletin we are also publishing a letter written by Barry Weisleder, a longtime representative of the United Secretariat (USeC) in Canada. For the past decade, other self-proclaimed "Trotskyists," including USeC leader Ernest Mandel, have reviled us as the

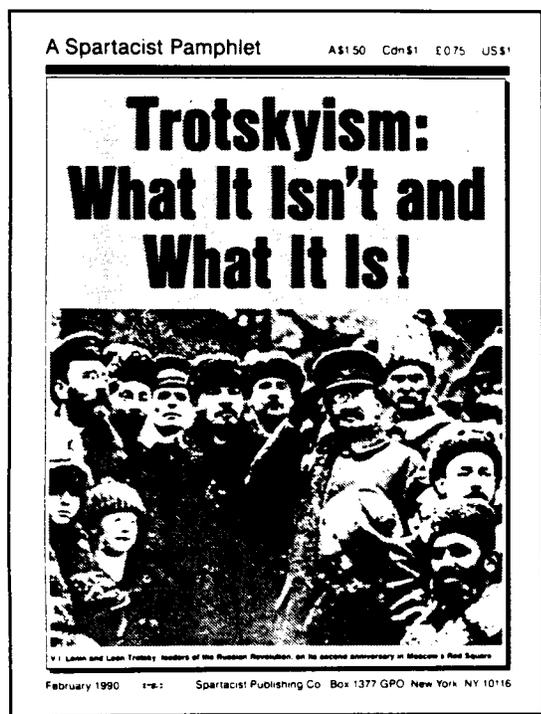
most abject apologists for Stalinism. But Weisleder seems to be caught in a time warp. He's still retailing the charge that the Spartacists are Stalinophobic.

In the 1960s, when the Mandelites were posing as arm-chair guerrillaists, they denounced us for not championing Fidel Castro and Che Guevara as the modern-day equivalent of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks. Now Weisleder writes: "The Spartacists began their sorry political career in the early 1960s by *denying* that the Cuban Revolution was socialist. They caught up to reality 10 years later...to defend Cuba against U.S. imperialism!" We refer people to the first issue of *Spartacist* (February-March 1964) where in big bold type we championed the demand: "DEFEND THE CUBAN REVOLUTION!"

Weisleder's letter was addressed to a young former member of the USeC's Socialist Challenge organization in Edmonton, which was recently devastated by a split of the majority and most active members of the small branch. These comrades were won to the program of the ICL and have recently fused with our Canadian section, the Trotskyist League of Canada.

In his dim and ham-handed attempt to dissuade this young comrade from following his comrades in joining the ICL, Weisleder speaks darkly of "the de-humanizing, self-isolating process that you can observe the aforementioned comrades now going through" now that they have been won over to "Spartacism." It's a wonder he didn't ask if the comrade had noticed they were growing horns.

An analysis of the real positions of revolutionary Trotskyism against the revisionist currents, particularly in light of the demise of Stalinist rule in East Germany.



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The whole thing reads like something taken from the script of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

It is instructive that Weisleder's textbook McCarthyite depiction of our organization aimed at "convincing" this young comrade that he should stay with the USec is borrowed from the BT's grotesque slanders against us. Yet the BT claims that its purpose is to win people to the "true" program of Spartacism before our "degeneration."

Hate the Soviet Union, Hate the Spartacist League

In his closing speech at the 1937 Dewey Commission hearings on the Moscow Trials in Coyoacán, Trotsky argued against the outrageous slanders that he was engaged in a "conspiracy" with Hitler and the Mikado: "I wrote books, articles and letters and held conversations devoted to the defense of Socialism, the proletarian revolution and the struggle against fascist and all other forms of reaction.... One gets the impression that I built a skyscraper to 'camouflage' a dead rat. No, it is not convincing!"

The work, history and views of our tendency extending back over more than 25 years is the most powerful refutation of the BT and the BSA. This is all available to the public in carefully indexed and bound volumes of our press—a nearly unique practice on the left.

As opposed to the Northites, who present themselves as infallible, and the BT, who present our organization as a bureaucratic cult of would-be infallible leaders, we have not only been forthright in the presentation of our political views but have also openly told the truth about the problems faced by our small revolutionary organization.

We made the main document for the Eighth National Conference of the Spartacist League/U.S., "Toward Revolutionary Conjunction," publicly available. This was met with positive amazement by other self-proclaimed leftists who are used to being completely dishonest about themselves and willfully lying about us. As for the views of our opponents, we make their press available in our local offices and have published what we consider some of the best or most important of their polemics against our organization in this series.

In contrast, the mendacious practices and assertions of the Gruppe Spartakus and the BSA reflect the Stalinist-derived breakdown of the "far left" in relation both to proletarian morality and to advancing the cause of working-class struggle. Our answer to the lies, slanders and calumny they heap on our organization can be found in the millions of pieces of our propaganda that were distributed throughout the DDR and in the work of the SpAD.

Russian-Language Spartacist Bulletin No. 1

Contents:

New, lengthy **Introduction** presents a Trotskyist perspective on the developments in the Soviet Union.

Trotskyism: What It Is

Published in English as "Trotskyism: What It Isn't and What It Is!" February 1990. An analysis of the real positions of revolutionary Trotskyism against the revisionist currents, particularly in light of the demise of Stalinist rule in East Germany.

Three pieces from the intervention of the ICL into the upheavals in the DDR during the last year including **What the Spartacists Want** and letters to soldier comrades distributed to Soviet troops stationed in the DDR.

When Was the Soviet Thermidor? From *Spartacist*, English edition, No. 43-44, Summer 1989.

In Defense of Marshal Tukhachevsky

Translated from *Workers Vanguard* No. 321, 14 January 1983. Refutation of slanders against one of the Red Army's most brilliant leaders.

Reprints from the writings of Leon Trotsky:

From the Transitional Program

"The USSR and Problems of the Transitional Epoch"

Chapter V of *The Revolution Betrayed*

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Бюллетень Спартаковцев

SPARTACIST



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Снова на путь Ленина и Троцкого!

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The International Communist League mobilized all its resources to intervene in the unfolding political revolution following the collapse of the former Stalinist regime of Erich Honecker. Despite our small forces we fought tooth and nail against capitalist counterrevolution and for a proletarian political revolution against the Stalinists.

We initiated the Treptow demonstration, the largest anti-fascist demonstration in the history of Germany, where for the first time in the history of the DDR, Trotskyists were able to put forward their program—calling for a workers united front against the fascists, for workers militias and for a Germany of workers and soldiers councils through forging “a new workers party—of equal rights, equal duties—in the spirit of Lenin, Liebknecht and Luxemburg.” We told some hard truths to the largely SED/PDS crowd. Our warnings of the danger of capitalist restoration and our criticisms of the failures and incompetence of the former Stalinist misrulers were met with boos and heckling.

We mobilized in defense of Vietnamese, Mozambican, Polish and other foreign workers against racism and chauvinism, publishing revolutionary greetings to these workers in their languages and to Red Army soldiers in Russian. In the March 18 elections, the SpAD offered to call for a vote, in those constituencies where we did not present candidates, to any parties which stated, in writing, their absolute opposition to capitalist reunification. There were no takers. The rest of the “left” caved in to imperialist *Anschluss*, at best trying

to give it a more “human” face.

Friends and supporters, including many former members of our organization, contributed generously to advance our work in Germany. They saw our fight to forge an authentic Leninist party and to bring the program of revolutionary Trotskyism to the workers of Germany as a vindication of all that Trotsky had relentlessly fought for—to revive and drive forward the program of proletarian internationalism and workers democracy that brought the Russian working masses to power in 1917.

This is anathema to the BT and the Northites who, despite differences in style and the particular eccentricities that motivate the two organizations, share one overriding thing in common: hatred of the Soviet Union. In the former DDR, the bitter fruits of their position are now being realized. The economy, which was stagnant and bureaucratically mismanaged by the Stalinists, is being completely dismantled by the West German imperialists as they drive to turn East Germany into a hinterland for the vast expansion of the Fourth Reich. Driven by their “anti-Stalinist” fervor, the Gruppe Spartakus and the BSA echo the imperialist witchhunters in their relentless drive to root out anyone in East Germany who ever called themselves a Communist. As a surrogate for their anti-Sovietism, their “polemics” against the SpAD are a chemically pure attempt to set us up for destruction at the hands of the most reactionary enemies of the October Revolution.

Spartacist League/U.S.
17 March 1991

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An English translation of the following article by the Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter was run in the 21 December 1990 issue of the American Workers League's newspaper, the Bulletin. In comparing the Bulletin translation

with the original BSA article we found some errors and deviations from the German text. Here we are printing our own translation to present the most accurate rendering of the article as it appeared in German.



Translated from *Neue Arbeiterpresse*,
No. 633, 23 November 1990

Bundestag Election '90 — What Do the Others Stand For?

The SpAD — Provocateurs Against the Fourth International

The "Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands," which refers to itself as a "section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)," has nothing in common with the Fourth International founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938. Rather, the aim and purpose of this grouping is to discredit Trotskyism in the working class.

Whereas the Fourth International in its founding program designated the "overthrow of this same Thermidorian (Stalinist) bureaucracy" as "the chief political task in the USSR," in the DDR the SpAD has specialized in defending the Stalinist power apparatus and its shadiest representatives.

In its election advertising it gives support to the Stasi general of many years' standing, Markus Wolf, and to the PDS functionaries Pohl and Langnitschke who for years have been conducting monetary transactions for the SED and are presently in jail on account of the PDS' financial transactions. It glorifies the Red Army—which in 1953 crushed the workers uprising in the DDR, marched into Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968—as a "sentry against NATO and West German imperialism," and calls for "workers united-front actions to defend and honor our Soviet Army comrades and their families"!

Even back in December and January the SpAD, which at that time still appeared under the name

"Spartakist-Gruppen," had, by its notorious defense of the Stasi, the Vopo, the SED Betriebskampfgruppen [factory militias] and the NVA [DDR army], made a name for itself as a "Stasi" party.

The support of the most despicable Stalinist crimes by the SpAD and its West German predecessor "Trotzkistische Liga Deutschlands" (TLD) has a long history.

Thus in 1979 the TLD enthusiastically welcomed the Red Army's invasion of Afghanistan. In 1981 it demanded an intervention of the Soviet Army in Poland against the trade union "Solidarność" and cheered the imposition of martial law by General Jaruzelski. "The counterrevolutionary course of Solidarność must be stopped!", wrote the TLD newspaper "Spartakist" at the time. "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 Solidarność' counterrevolution."

Political Provocation

The attempt by the SpAD to pass these pro-Stalinist policies off as Trotskyism is a political provocation aimed at discrediting the program of the Fourth International.

The Fourth International has always defended the nationalized prop-

erty relations in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and declared its readiness to back these countries in the case of a military conflict against imperialism. That is its position up to this day. However, never for that reason has it supported or justified the crimes of the Stalinist bureaucracy against the working class. On the contrary. It has always stressed that the property relations in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and the social gains associated with these relations, can only be defended if the working class overthrows the Stalinist bureaucracy through a political revolution and itself assumes power.

When the mass movement against the SED regime developed in the fall of 1989, the BSA fought for the working class to seize the initiative itself and overthrow the SED regime. We warned again and again that Krenz, Modrow and Gysi, in collaboration with the parties of the "Round Table," would hand over power to the capitalists.

The SpAD accused us of "anti-communism" because of this, and paid court to the PDS. The latter valued their services, gave them the use of information stands at its conferences and allowed them to speak at Gysi's side at a mass demonstration in Treptow on January 3.

Since then, the warnings of the BSA have been so dramatically confirmed that even the SpAD has had to change its position. In its

latest election advertising spot it now declares: "Gorbachev and the PDS have sold out the DDR to the bourgeoisie of Auschwitz. Now, following their lead, Gysi is even delivering up his own party."

But this changes nothing about its pro-Stalinist course. In place of Gysi and Modrow it has now grown fond of Pohl, Langnitschke and Wolf, who are politically at one with Gysi and have merely arranged a division of labor among themselves.

The BSA, too, has condemned the state's attacks on the PDS; not, however, out of sympathy for this party and its leaders, but because the settling of accounts with it is a task for the working class and not for the bourgeois state.

Hysteria Against the Fourth International

The provocative role of the SpAD is expressed most clearly in its attacks against the Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter, the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, attacks which become ever more hysterical as time goes on.

These attacks have nothing to do with a political dispute, of the kind that is customary and necessary within the workers movement. They are not based on political arguments, but on hysterical slanders, which are neither proven nor substantiated and are simply unintelligible to any thinking worker.

But the SpAD does not in any way direct its invective against the BSA toward politically thinking workers; rather, it is aiming at unstable and demoralized elements from the middle class, who without asking further questions simply accept that the Trotskyists of the Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter are "political bandits" who adhere to a "cult with a penchant for gangsterism and slander" and are preparing for "hard thuggery and murder." In this manner it seeks to revive the collapsed edifice of Stalinist lies about the Fourth International.

The hysterical language of the SpAD is directed at people who are in a mental state similar to that of the schizophrenic would-be assassin of Lafontaine, Adelheid Streidel. It is an attempt to stir up a pogrom atmosphere against the International

Committee of the Fourth International and its leading representatives.

What Is the SpAD?

The SpAD and its West German predecessor the TLD are the German extensions of a U.S. grouping called the Spartacist League. In the 1960s its leader James Robertson resigned from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the former American section of the Fourth International.

At that time the International Committee of the Fourth International was conducting a political struggle against the degeneration of the SWP, which had joined the United Secretariat of Ernest Mandel and thrown overboard the program of the Fourth International. Robertson decided against collaborating with the International Committee because the discipline of an international organization would have been a barrier to his own opportunist maneuvers in the U.S.

He shifted his political activities to the centers of the petty-bourgeois protest movement of the 1960s—the University of Berkeley in California and Greenwich Village in New York—out of which the Spartacist League recruited its members and which are still the principal areas of its activity. Today, in these former strongholds of the protest movement, one finds the crassest forms of the demoralization and degeneration that followed on its collapse. The Spartacist League and its German offshoot the SpAD are the consummate political expression of this diseased milieu.

They long ago wrote off the possibility of mobilizing the working class as an independent political force on the basis of the program of the Fourth International and replaced it with a growing hostility to the working class—hence their support for the Stalinist bureaucracy and its crimes.

Concealed behind their blood-thirsty militant shrieks and their hysteria lies sheer panic: the election victory of the CDU in the Volkshammer election was for them tantamount to...the seizure of power by fascism, the establishment of a Fourth Reich. "Now," proudly proclaims the SpAD, "we are fighting for workers resistance against the Fourth Reich."

A member of the Spartacist League, Noah Wolkenstein, who had been sent into the DDR to lend support to the SpAD, drew the ultimate conclusion from this devastating perspective and committed suicide. In obituaries, the Spartacist League and the SpAD expressed a sympathetic understanding for this act.

The unstable political character of the petty-bourgeois layers upon which the Spartacist League bases itself is expressed in bizarre fluctuations in its political line. On the one hand, it is obsessed by the danger of fascism and racism and—having no confidence in a mobilization of the working class—has repeatedly provoked punch-ups with small groups of Ku Klux Klansmen. Yet, when the notorious racist Bernhard Goetz shot four black youths in the New York subway, the Spartacist League sprang forward as his defender. They justified lynch justice, saying it was "dangerous for vulnerable looking white people to ride the subway, given the presence of marauding black youths."*

The main activity of the Spartacist League and its international offshoots has, since its founding, consisted of organizing political provocations against the International Committee of the Fourth International and the Workers League, which advocates the policies of the ICFI in the U.S. If they continue to pose as Trotskyists, it is only to carry out these provocations more effectively.

In Germany the TLD was dissolved by the Spartacist League in 1985, with the justification that it had degenerated into nationalism. Only after the Wall fell in the fall of 1989 and after the BSA had intervened heavily in the DDR did it re-emerge fully fledged.

We warn all workers against this organization, whose petty-bourgeois hysteria and hostility to the working class offer an ideal medium for the machinations of provocateurs and police agents.

*No such quote exists in *Workers Vanguard* (No. 371, 25 January 1985) which was cited by the BSA as their source. We refer readers to "NYC 'Subway Vigilante': On Contradiction" in the letters column of that issue of *Workers Vanguard* for our real position on the Goetz case. [ed.]

STATEMENT OF THE GRUPPE SPARTAKUS ON THE BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS:

No Vote to the SPD/No Vote to the PDS Critical Electoral Support to the SpAD

The SPD has carried out an openly pro-imperialist unification policy in the West and the East. In the election campaign, Lafontaine is fanning the anti-foreigner backlash and seeking to give himself a distinctive image with the necessity of tax increases: The working class is expected to pay for capitalist reunification! The PDS, in contrast, is trying to play the classic social-democratic card as the party of the "socially weak." However, the capitulation of the PDS leadership to the latest attacks by the state apparatus gives yet another confirmation: the last remnants of the formerly ruling Stalinist bureaucracy are seeking a cozy spot within bourgeois democracy, even at the cost of the sacrifice of Pohl/Langnitschke. This stance is only the continuation of the SED-PDS policy of handing over the DDR to German imperialism without a fight. That historic betrayal and the rightward evolution of the PDS rule out critical electoral support.

Why vote for the Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SpAD)?

Many militant workers and leftists rightly despise the SpAD for its sectarianism and its arrogant attitude as "savior of the working class." But in contrast to the pro-capitalist practice of the SPD and PDS, the program of the SpAD in large part can be characterized formally as Leninist-Trotskyist. The SpAD calls, among other things, for independent working-class actions, for workers councils to achieve control over the plants. It is for workers strikes against the intervention of German imperialism in the Near East and for the mobilization of the workers against the fascists.

On the basis of this schematic but formally Trotskyist program the Gruppe Spartakus is giving critical support to the SpAD in these elections. Thereby we wish to express the principle "class against class." At the same time we warn against the illusion that this sectarian, pseudo-Trotskyist group, bureaucratically degenerated and deformed to the highest degree, can play any real role whatsoever in working-class struggles. The SpAD is an obstacle to the building of the revolutionary Trotskyist workers party. Many of its newly acquired members, who were attracted by the SpAD's revolutionary affectations, have been spat out because of the development of political differences, or repelled by the undemocratic and repressive internal life, the parody of a Leninist-Trotskyist party. While we have lots of political differences with the SpAD and the ICL led by the guru Robertson, we particularly consider two aspects of its present propaganda to be confused and dangerously disorienting.

The SpAD and the "Fourth Reich"

Especially since the *Anschluss*, the BRD has been termed the "Fourth Reich" and Kohl the chancellor of the "Fourth Reich" in SpAD propaganda. It appears the SpAD has taken over the petty-bourgeois theory of the growing "fascisization" of Germany, that the state functionaries are (secret?) fascists and that the repressive apparatus of the police and the *Verfassungsschutz* [Office for the Protection of the Constitution] constitute independent fascist formations. The SpAD's propaganda thereby feeds into the impressionist view that the reactionary reunification of Germany has called forth an abrupt change from a bourgeois parliamentary

democracy to a fascist dictatorship that is destroying all workers organizations and already setting up its concentration camps.

Of course, the leaders of the SpAD know only too well that at this point in time the German capitalists see no necessity for handing over the state apparatus to the fascists as they did in 1933. The SpAD is thus using the fascisization theory for its brand of catastrophe-mongering: This is the last chance! Only a mass vote for the SpAD can stop fascism! Join the SpAD to fight the Fourth Reich!

A small revolutionary party can play an important role in organizing working-class actions to smash fascism. But the SpAD is disarming the working class by creating the impression that we are already living under fascism. It thereby downplays the frightful reality of fascism in power, distracting attention from the necessity of smashing the fascist gangs while they are still small.

The SpAD in search of an anti-imperialist wing of the Soviet bureaucracy

The SpAD is one of the few ostensibly revolutionary groups advocating military defense of Iraq against the imperialist-led military and economic aggression. However, it fosters the illusion that a wing of the Soviet bureaucracy defends Iraq. In its election program as well as in an Open Letter to various embassies (with a copy to its favorite general Snetkov) the SpAD calls on the USSR to lift its arms embargo and ship arms to Iraq. Here the fact that all wings of the Soviet bureaucracy, including Ligachev and the military, are capitulating to Gorbachev's open cooperation with imperialism against Iraq is consciously denied. In contrast, the Trotskyist analysis of the role of the ruling Stalinist caste leads to the position that the workers must not place confidence in any wing of the USSR bureaucracy to defend the collectivized property forms of the bureaucratically degenerated workers state.

The SpAD creates yet further confusion when it invokes the memory of Lenin and Trotsky's Red Army that drove the imperialists out of the oil fields of Baku in 1921. It suggests that the Soviet troops commanded by the bureaucracy can be equated with the revolutionary Red Army.

Trotskyists, on the other hand, know that only the working class in revolt, as it attempts to establish its direct political rule, can also cause parts of the bureaucracy to split off and go over to the side of the workers.

The demand that the Soviet bureaucracy lift the arms embargo is dangerously disorienting! Of course, it is not in principle wrong to place demands on the Stalinists. However, it makes sense only if they are at least pretending to support the oppressed against the imperialist oppressor. But when the Stalinists make clear that they stand on the side of the imperialists, as they have done since the beginning of the Gulf crisis, then such demands are absurd. This revision of Trotskyism by the SpAD is by no means surprising. In past years the ICL has grovelingly tailed after the most diverse Stalinist leaders, in search of a non-existent Leninist wing concealed somewhere in the top levels of the Stalinist state and party apparatus. The SpAD is incapable of building the Trotskyist workers party.

Those leftists and revolutionaries who wish to draw the lessons of the SpAD election campaign and want to learn how the SpAD has discredited Trotskyism in the past should get in contact with us. Let's discuss how Trotsky's program must be applied by revolutionaries today!

17 November 1990

Gruppe Spartakus

German Section of the
International Bolshevik Tendency

The following is a slightly abridged typescript of a letter by Barry Weisleder, a longtime spokesman for the United Secretariat in Canada, which was sent to a former member of the Canadian Socialist Challenge organization in Edmonton.

Toronto, Ontario
Nov. 15, 1990

Dear Richard,

Although we met and spoke only a brief few times during July, I feel that I know you well enough to take the liberty of sending you this note, and some additional information which I hope you find interesting.

The events of this past summer in Edmonton S.C. [Socialist Challenge] (which unfortunately coincided with your own introduction to the revolutionary left), were truly bizarre and tragic.... And let me assure you that the struggle for principled political functioning continues-- and it is a struggle that you should be a part of.

The reason that I'm writing to you now is that you've had a chance to see the political alternative chosen by comrades Andrew, Asha, Nevin and Corey, in action. No doubt you've made your own preliminary assessment.

I've been involved in socialist politics for over 21 years, and I became acquainted with the Spartacist tendency in the early 1970s. I'm writing to tell you that your worst suspicions are true. The Spartacists (Trotskyist League, or their splinter group Bolshevik Tendency) are a sectarian cult group of the classical type. They develop political positions which have little to do with Leninist-Trotskyist orthodoxy, but rather which serve to distinguish and isolate their tendency from all other points of view. Being isolated is their "point d'honneur," because they do not seek to grow by participation, much less by leading real social struggles, but rather by propagandistically "exposing" other socialist groups.

The Spartacists began their sorry political career in the early 1960s by denying that the Cuban Revolution was socialist. They caught up to reality 10 years later--after denouncing every other tendency and criminally abstaining from the actual movement, in the U.S. and elsewhere, to defend Cuba against U.S. imperialism! This pattern of sectarian political behaviour has been repeated dozens of times by the Spartacists--in relation to Vietnam, in relation to Nicaragua and others.

In order to insulate their members from the demoralizing effects of their own impotent and self-isolating strategy, the Spartacists impose the most rigid, totalitarian internal regime on members. The "party" controls most aspects of every member's life--where you live, where you work, with whom you may associate--and how you spent most of your time.

The Spartacists transform healthy activists into doctrinaire robots of a political cult which operates in a weird political twilight zone, beyond the fringes of real class struggles.

As a person who developed into a real activist, in the youth-anti-war sector in Edmonton, I know you will have concerns about the de-humanizing, self-isolating process that you can observe the aforementioned comrades now going through.

Politically, this began with the declaration of the RMT, which lied about the RMT's own origins! Andrew, etc., state that they conducted a long struggle against the positions of the Fourth International on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. This is pure fiction, a political re-write of history to justify their "fusion" with the Spartacists (who defend the Soviet state against the Soviet workers!).

From there, the declaration goes down hill. It equates Quebec nationalism with English Canadian nationalism. The Sparts have a bizarre, anti-Marxist position on [the] "national question." That is, they do not support national liberation struggles; but they do defend the right to self-determination of oppressor nations or groups (e.g. Protestant-Unionists in the North of Ireland; Israeli-Zionists in Palestine; whites in South Africa). Why? Is it so that the Sparts can glory in their "unique" (i.e. isolated) policy, or is it to prevent potential "reverse discrimination" (the classical argument liberals use to defend the status quo)?

In any case, their policy is sadly misguided. It is the product of a sectarian mind set, bent on avoiding real struggles whose dynamic is to challenge class and bureaucratic domination of the planet and humanity.

None of the problems in S.C. justify leaving the real political world for the twilight zone of Spartacism. I was truly sorry to see Asha, Andrew and Corey draw such extreme conclusions, based on such limited and brief experiences as they had, and then embrace the negation of their own activism. But once they'd done that, once they'd signed their own political obituaries, we had no choice but to sever our political relations. (At the Central Committee meeting, interestingly enough, Asha did not even vote against her own suspension, or the expulsion of the others! In a real sense, she, and they, had already decided to leave the Fourth International--which Asha confirmed as she stormed out of the room, uttering foul epithets.)

I don't know whether you've made up your mind yet about what you are going to do politically. Concerning the Spartacists, there's a lot that bears looking into before you get drawn into a very weird outfit. They have destroyed so many activists over the past 30 years, without ever contributing anything useful to the working class and the oppressed--which is why they grow only in periods of political downturn of the class struggle, and are joined mainly by people impatient with the objective situation.

Perhaps you are not open to my point of view. Then again, perhaps you've wondered where things are really going ... with your comrades being moved out of town, with political positions being expressed (anti-"polyvanguardism") that were never discussed internally.

For what it's worth, you've got the benefit [of] my observations at this juncture. The Sparts are nothing new. Keep a critical perspective. Remain a political activist.

Let's talk. You can reach me by writing to the address at the beginning of this letter, or by phoning.

I hope to hear from you.

In solidarity,
Barry Weisleder