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# **Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League**

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**—a bulletin series of opponent material**

## **NUMBER 7**

### **Introduction**

#### **“Real Trotskyist Platform or Spartacist Platform” Contribution to the Debate with Algerian PST Militants**

by Damien Elliott, editor of *l'Egalité*, newspaper of the JCR,  
youth group of French section of the United Secretariat,  
August 1992

#### **“Open Letter to the JCR-*l'Egalité*”**

by the Ligue Trotskyste de France, 27 July 1992

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



**October 1992  
whole no. 7  
\$2**

## INTRODUCTION

Since the onset of Cold War II in the late 1970s, all wings of Ernest Mandel's self-proclaimed "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" have made common cause with any and every anti-Soviet "movement": from Khomeini's mullahs in Iran, and Lech Walesa's Solidarność in Poland, to other viciously reactionary nationalists from the Baltics to the Balkans. Today, as the forces of counterrevolution ravage the former deformed and degenerated workers states of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, leftward-moving oppositionists to the USec's grotesque capitulations and liquidationism have emerged in several affiliated sections in West Europe and elsewhere. This development has been fueled by massive political disarray in the USec, whose leaders were unable even to agree on whether the annexation of the former East German deformed workers state by the imperialist Fourth Reich was an event which, in the words of one USec leader, merited "champagne" or "Alka-Seltzer."

In this "Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League," the seventh in a series of bulletins published by the SL/U.S. reproducing material hostile to our international organization written by leftist opponents, we reprint a document attacking left oppositionists in the USec's Algerian PST; it was written in French by USec member Damien Elliott, and has been translated by us. Elliott is one of the principal spokesmen for a couple of hundred young militants in the JCR-l'Egalité, the increasingly dissident youth group of the USec's Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) in France.

As an appendix to his document we are also reprinting an English translation of an open letter to the members of the JCR-l'Egalité, dated 27 July 1992, which was written by our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyiste de France. This letter addresses the evolution of the heterogeneous JCR-l'Egalité. An influential part of its leadership had originally supported a (not insignificant) minority faction in the USec which heralded the capitalist reunification of Germany. But today many JCR-l'Egalité members have been repelled by the LCR's championing of the Yeltsinite counter coup in the Soviet Union last August.

Under the heading "Real Trotskyist Platform or Spartacist Platform," the transparent aim of Elliott's document is to inoculate any leftward-moving elements in the USec against our organization, the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). The ICL is well known for our intransigent opposition to the forces of capitalist counterrevolution in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and for our commitment to the struggle to crystallize a Leninist vanguard to mobilize the proletariat independently in its own class interests. To counter the influence our tendency can--and obviously does--have among dissidents within the USec, Elliott resorts to distortions and outright fabrications designed to depict our organization as a senile and cynical Stalinophilic cult which worships before portraits of General Jaruzelski. In this he borrows heavily from the script of the "Bolshevik Tendency"--a miscellaneous collection of embittered ex-members, who trickled out of our organization under the early pressures of Cold War II, and who

have since made a career out of grotesque slanders of the ICL, drawn from their abiding hostility to the Trotskyist program of unconditional defense of the gains of the October Revolution.

Certainly, no member of ours would recognize Elliott's portrayal of the ICL as the organization to which they belong. But such "devices" are not new to the more left-sounding aspiring leaders within the USec who desperately want to keep their followers from drawing the programmatic, and corresponding organizational, conclusions of opposition to the wretched politics of the United Secretariat.

The first bulletin of our "Hate Trotskyism" series reprinted a document entitled "Spartacist League: Anatomy of a Sect," which was published by the more left-wing adherents of the USec in North America in the early 1970s. Here we were similarly denounced as sectarian abstentionists. But then it was claimed that this derived from our Stalinophobia! In those days, when the Mandelites were enthusing over the Vietnamese NLF and posturing as armchair guerrillaists, we were reviled for not embracing Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro as the modern-day equivalents of the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky. Not everybody bought this line. Those who didn't were among the USec oppositionists who found their way to our organization. But those who continued to gravitate around the inveterate maneuverist Ernest Mandel were generally demoralized, ground down and cynically spit out of the USec.

The present effort, as represented in Elliott's document, is particularly notable as an attempt to intimidate young oppositionists from pursuing their politics by pressing them to respond to ludicrous organizational charges, centered on alleged ICL internal practices which leftward-moving USec members, as in the Algerian PST, are hardly in a position to try to refute. On a political level, those who today seek to establish themselves in their own bailiwick as leaders of a centrist opposition within the confines of the USec--whose politics have for more than a decade been virtually indistinguishable from the pro-NATO Cold War social democrats--charge us with Stalinophilia. Confronted with the ICL, Elliott's opposition to Mandel & Co. vanishes, as he panders to the USec leadership and alibis their egregious anti-Sovietism, which went so far as to praise the Estonian Nazi "Forest Brothers" as "freedom fighters" in the "struggle against Stalinism."

As has been our general practice in our "Hate Trotskyism" series, we do not use this forum for full-fledged polemics against opponent material but rather seek to let what we reprint speak for itself. But we will make one final observation. An organization which used viciously anti-communist anarchists as goons at its international summer camp this year, while expelling an Algerian woman member for distributing the "Trotskyist Platform" which Elliott finds so offensive, is hardly a vehicle for those who seriously seek to fight for the program of revolutionary Trotskyism.

9 October 1992

**REAL TROTSKYIST PLATFORM OR SPARTACIST PLATFORM**  
**Contribution to the Debate with Algerian PST Supporters**

The Fourth International (United Secretariat) is undergoing a deep crisis marked by the political and organizational liquidation of numerous sections, with disarray among thousands of militants. This crisis is also affecting members of the PST, which is engaged in major debates on the problems of orientation, structure and implantation. Like other sectors of the International which still pursue a line of construction (JCR, CGR in Poland, group in East Germany...), the PST feels acutely the painful contradiction between this appetite and the USec's general line. There are two ways to resolve this contradiction: 1) by tailing after the international leadership or withdrawing to national terrain, thereby running the risk of political disintegration which would benefit sects with a clearly more coherent program than that of the USec; 2) by deepening the party's theoretical reflection and its active intervention into the international debates, by building and extending the Trotskyist opposition against the majority's course.

Taking advantage of the lack of information circulating in the PST, the International Communist League ("Spartacists") are currently waging quite a sustained offensive in the party. Thus we have seen the appearance of a document, the "Trotskyist Platform," based 100% on this organization's positions. Not only is the document marked by the influence of the Spartacists but it is a grotesque caricature, entirely removed from the current debates in the USec and obviously crowning an entrust operation. It is nonetheless dangerous, presenting a certain number of sectarian responses to correct criticisms. The present text aims to bring out the contradictory elements of the Spartacist platform and to expose the real nature of this current.

The "Trotskyist Platform" (Spartacist) is built around the points of debate that the ICL has considered key for a decade: Russia, Afghanistan, Poland, Germany. To this is naturally added the Algerian question. We will answer these points, at the same time adding elements of information on other Spartacist positions not mentioned in the document.

**1) The Russian question**

The USec has a serious problem in its orientation on the question of Eastern Europe and the USSR. Nothing really new here, as it goes back to the years '48-'50 and gave rise to an international split (IS versus IC) in 1952-53. The essence of the USec's methodological error is found in its objectivism, which leads it to slide either toward the idea that the bureaucracy can reform itself (international majority) or else toward supporting "mass movements" even if led by reactionaries (Matti). Today the USec refuses to construct the Russian section of the Fourth International, and contents itself with offering speaking platforms and money to fellow travelers such as the Eurocommunist Kagarlitsky or Buzgalin. Both run around trying to create a Labor Party whose program consists of social improvements in capitalist restoration. And thus the opposite of the Trotskyist program of defense of the USSR,

which concretely meant the defense of workers' gains and frontal opposition to the maneuvers of Gorbachev and then Yeltsin in collusion with the IMF. It is entirely possible to envision a bloc of Trotskyists with one part of the bureaucracy against another part whose program was for rapid restoration. At the time of the August putsch the alternatives were posed as follows: should we support Gorbachev against the putschists? the putschists against Gorbachev? Hesitation was permissible and a number of us have admitted that we did hesitate up to the moment that the putschists' program was known. It was a capitalist-restorationist program identical to that of the former regime, minus democracy. Sort of a soft version of Tiananmen. From then on, it was clear that the proletariat should oppose it without giving any political support either to the former ruling apparatus or to the Yeltsin wing of the bureaucracy. The Spartacist position making Yeltsin the main enemy in August really amounts to supporting the putschists hypocritically. By not openly taking this line, the Spartacists have shown they are not only Stalinophilic but also inconsistent. On the other hand it is a lie and a scandalous slander to claim that the USec "clearly supported counterrevolution in the USSR." What the USec can be reproached for is having done nothing (in contrast to groups linked to the British WRP or the Lambertists), since its policy is not to construct the Russian section of the Fourth International. In contrast, it was completely to the credit of the LCR that they published a press release delighting in the failure of the putsch while warning the workers against Yeltsin (and to Matti's discredit that he attacked them for this warning).

In the end, all of Spartacist's politics concerning the workers states are an extrapolation of the hypothesis of a bloc with one Stalinist tendency against the others as envisaged in the Transitional Program. A hypothesis that was based on the existence of the "Reiss faction," that is, a revolutionary tendency in the bureaucracy. A tendency which was massacred the very year said program was written. "Reiss factions" might exist in the Vietnamese or Cuban CPs, but in Russia and East Europe these things were settled a long time ago. In any case, making this hypothesis its entire working method can only lead to serious Stalinophilic deformations. A step gleefully taken by the Spartacists in the early '80s, when they baptized their contingent at an anti-fascist demonstration in the USA the "Yuri Andropov Brigade." Then when their American newspaper, Workers Vanguard, devoted part of its front page to a eulogy to the same Andropov when he died. Confronted with the emergence of national demands in the USSR, the Spartacists adopted the Oehlerite position of opposing them in the name of "defense" of the workers state. A method which is counterposed to that of Bolshevism: recognition of the right of all peoples to separation (Lenin) and putting forward the slogan for socialist independence in certain cases like the Ukraine (Trotsky). Today the Spartacists, obsessed by the possibility of rebellion in some provincial battalions of the former Soviet Army, stubbornly continue to see a workers state in Yeltsin's Russia. Their pro-Stalinist political appetites thus paradoxically make them deny the bourgeois character of the state put in place to restore capitalism...and lead them to the same formal position as the ex- or crypto-Lambertists (Matti, Broué, Just).

## 2) Afghanistan

In contrast to currents such as the Lambertists, the Morenoites or Lutte Ouvrière, the USec early on took a courageous and correct position on the Afghan question:

"In the course of the conflict between the reactionary coalition and imperialism on one side, the USSR troops and the PDPA government on the other, the demand for Afghan sovereignty in the name of self-determination can be nothing other than a democratic cover for the plans of reaction and of imperialism. The withdrawal of Soviet troops would in no way assure freedom for Afghan nationalities to choose their fate. It would only leave the door open for the installation of a reactionary regime oppressing peasants and workers, under the domination of Washington, to consolidate its military disposition in the region."

--Inprecor No. 69, 7 February 1980

The latest developments in the situation show just how correct this line was. And just how wrong the USec was to change it to demand the withdrawal of Soviet troops, which objectively led to the current disaster: restoration of barbarism against women and interethnic killings. Some sections had, however, maintained the previous line, like the SWP in the USA.

Having made the Afghanistan question their political stock in trade for some time, the Spartacists nonetheless only succeeded in making things worse with a new demonstration of ultra-leftism and adventurist sectarianism. Instead of simply calling for the military victory of the Soviets and the PDPA over reaction without giving political support to one or the other, the Spartacists put forward the uncritical Stalinophilic slogan "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan." The intended goal was obviously not to increase the consciousness of the masses but to promote themselves by distinguishing themselves as much as possible from other left forces. Good example of obtuse sectarianism giving greater importance to the self-interest of a tendency than to the correctness of its slogans. But this is always true of Spartacist politics. It found its logical conclusion with the affair of the "international brigade" which the Spartacists tried to set up a few years later. This operation was basically of doubtful utility, but the most interesting thing is to see with what cynicism the Spartacist guru Robertson tried to set it up. Here is the complete text of a fax sent to the LTF by the international Spartacist leadership for launching the brigade:

"6 February 1990 [1989]. To: Paris. See if appropriate Afghan embassy interested in International Brigade to be flown in via India. Down with the Mullahs! War to the Death! Now is the winter of our discontent, Jim. Plan to use the youthful scum of the left Stalinists, hard Trotskyists, radical skinheads and the odd witless Aussie and embittered Iranian émigrés--the Mad Marx Brigade. To list add: Guevarist (i.e., Auguste Blanquists and Tukhachevskyites). Expect from government: military direction and some

food. Brigade will get own weapons by using rocks, sawed-off shotguns and fire-hardened spears, working nights. Recruit especially in Italy and Latin America but from all over. Kiss your ass goodbye, Long Live Communism! No pay just expenses."

Is this the kind of method the organizers of the "Trotskyist Platform" of the PST consider the be-all and end-all of revolutionary politics? In any case, in France a series of Spartacist militants decided enough was enough and quit the organization.

### 3) Poland

The emergence of the Solidarność union in Poland correctly gave rise to enthusiasm in organizations calling themselves Trotskyist. Most of them gradually ended up uncritically adapting to it. During Solidarność' period of growth, the USec limited the tasks of the union to developing "self-management" in the plants, sucking up to a clerical leadership which then adopted self-management as its own doctrine. The only criticism made of Walesa was along the line of defending the "self-management" program, with no attention paid to the central political questions. But from the beginning there was the risk that in the absence of a revolutionary alternative, the Solidarność leadership would divert the political revolution into a bourgeois counterrevolution. With the advent of the Walesa government and the measures taken, the awakening is rather painful... Should we conclude from this that the Spartacists were right and it was correct to support Jaruzelski? The opposite of a wrong position unfortunately does not make a correct one, and once again the Spartacists tried to get a Stalinist military man to carry out the tasks of the proletariat. At the time of the nationalist coup d'état, things were far from settled inside Solidarność. It was only in 1984-85 that the underground leadership of Solidarność definitively dropped its mask and a revolutionary split in the union would have been possible. It was also at this time that a series of confused oppositional tendencies emerged. In the meantime the political capitulation of the Spartacists to Jaruzelski had reached the point that his portrait even decorated their local office in New York!

### 4) Germany

Everyone knows the USec's two symmetrical errors regarding Germany: 1) a majority, convinced that the question of reunification wouldn't be posed, which then got caught in its own trap tailing after DDR nationalists and the Stalinist slogan "never again Germany," 2) Matti's supporters who made themselves the cheerleaders for "unconditional reunification" although it was clearly apparent that reunification would be capitalist. A consistent Trotskyist tendency should have fought instead for socialist reunification, by clearly counterposing themselves to the Stalinophilic tendencies of the German left and to Kohl's maneuvers. Such was not the Spartacist policy, which was entirely oriented toward the attempt to split off a wing of the East German SED bureaucracy which they could use as a lever. Their

attempt culminated in the anti-fascist demonstration at Treptow Park in Berlin, a "united front" where they were manipulated by an SED which was looking for a smokescreen to conceal its central problem at the time: the demand by the masses that it should get out.

Since then, the Spartacists have maintained the same fundamental line of messing around in the Stalinist movement and making a cult of symbols of the former DDR regime. Witness their campaign for Erich Honecker, who had taken refuge in Russia and was threatened with extradition by the Kohl government. Of course, Trotskyists (unlike Matti who, like Yeltsin, demands a "Nuremberg for the Stalinists") deny the capitalist Kohl regime any right to judge Erich Honecker and must explain this. He must be judged by the German workers, who would undoubtedly sentence him severely. But what is the sense of a German "Trotskyist" party making the defense of Honecker its central political campaign? Have they nothing better to do? No, not if one's principal goal is the recruitment of unrepentant Stalinists. It could then be useful to associate Kohl's Germany with the Hitler regime. From then on, the Spartacists systematically have used the term "Fourth Reich" to designate the country, thus placing themselves on the terrain of the French Stalinists of the PCF with their traditional anti-German xenophobia. The Spartacists thus render incomprehensible the entire political evolution of the country, where the stage of bourgeois democracy is far from being superseded. The skinhead gangs are the by-product of capitalist reunification and must urgently be crushed, but in no way do they represent the immediate future of Germany.

## **5) Algeria**

### **a) On the general line of intervention of the PST**

The Algerian PST today represents one of the healthiest elements of the USec. First of all, for its appetite to build the revolutionary party, at a time when so many others are abdicating. Next, for its firmness in the face of events of historic magnitude, its refusal to compromise either with the regime or with the FIS [Islamic Salvation Front]. For this the PST has won the esteem and respect of thousands of revolutionary militants throughout the world. Organizations which do not belong to the USec, such as the PST (LIT-QI) and the Spanish PORE (LIRQI), have organized support meetings, have defended it publicly. All those who claim to be Trotskyist must close ranks around the Algerian PST!

For all that, is the party exempt from fraternal criticism? Of course not, and only by working with such criticism can we go forward. On condition that one does not proceed in the schematic-sectarian manner of the Spartacists. The PST's principal error in orientation has been raised either internally or publicly by a fair number of observers: a certain adaptation to the forms of bourgeois democracy and the forces that promote them, essentially the FFS [the bourgeois opposition Front of Socialist Forces]. The slogan for a constituent assembly put

forward by the PST against the FLN regime had a clearly indicated transitory character. On the contrary, however, when an extremely turbulent period opened up (FIS strike) the insistence on demands such as fully proportional representation seemed somewhat unreal and parliamentarist. This wasn't wrong in and of itself, but in the context fostered the illusion of a possible stabilization of a democratic bourgeois regime.

"...the formulas of democracy (freedom of press, the right to unionize, etc.) mean for us only incidental or episodic slogans in the independent movement of the proletariat and not a democratic noose fastened to the neck of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie's agents."

--Transitional Program

In a country like Algeria, the revolutionary program must indissolubly link democratic and anti-imperialist demands while at the same time seeking to organize the proletariat on its own ground. One of the essential tasks of the party in these circumstances is the fight for workers self-organization and thus for the class independence of the proletariat, for the independence of the UGTA [General Union of Algerian Workers, FLN-controlled union federation], the fight for a class party, for winning a proletarian implantation for the PST. In a country, like Algeria, which has already experienced a national revolution and important forms of social progress (nationalizations...), the focus on working-class and socialist demands should be preponderant in the revolutionary program.

While the PST has so far attempted to draw an independent class line with regard to the HCE [Haut Conseil d'Etat, current ruling body] and the FIS, the Spartacists are not far from portraying the latter as the main enemy. While they insist correctly on the danger posed by an opportunist policy toward the FIS (perfectly personified by the PT [Lambertist Parti des Travailleurs, Workers Party]), in the end they don't say much about the regime. Of course, the FIS is the mortal enemy of workers, women, Berbers. It often represents an immediate danger, and the struggle against its provocations cannot be postponed to a later stage. From this point of view, one must draw the lessons of the defeat of the line of adapting to fundamentalism applied by the USec, the Lambertists and the Morenoites during the Iranian revolution. We must learn from the Moroccan Marxist-Leninist militants who today are fighting fundamentalism, at the price of dozens of dead, in the universities. But confrontation with the FIS can have only a purely defensive and thus secondary character with respect to the principal task of the moment: to overthrow the HCE, agent of the IMF and imperialism which is plunging the Algerian masses into misery. Tearing the youth from the arms of the FIS can be accomplished in the medium term only by offering an alternative, by attempting to be the best fighters against the regime and the most consistent.

**b) On the question of women and national minorities,  
on intervention into mass movements**

The Spartacists clearly don't have much to propose concretely to Algerian women. One must wonder if their platform was written in Paris or Tizi when they put forward slogans such as "free abortion on demand for minors" or "for 24-hour day care." This kind of ultraleftist imbecility can only lead to catastrophe in a country where women face disapproval for smoking in public... It is typical of the general Spartacist method which tends to put forward an abstract maximum program as a substitute for the Trotskyist transitional method. In the same way, it would be absurd to abandon the women's movement such as it exists, to settle for a "women's section" of the PST (which from another point of view could be justified). To reason in terms of "being there" or "not being there" is to pose the problems in an idealist-sectarian way: the PST should intervene in the women's movement on the basis of its program, in order to win leadership. The method is the same toward all the oppressed minorities, in particular Berber-speakers. Trotskyists must reject both Spartacist abstentionism and the tendency not to fight in such movements to win them to a proletarian perspective.

As for the Spartacists, they pushed their ultraleftist logic to the limit, taking positions which objectively cover for the reactionaries on the woman question. In France they have refused to fight against the government's re-establishment of night work for women. While the LCR, JCR and all ostensibly Trotskyist forces based themselves on defense of the prohibition of night work for women to win the prohibition of all night work, the Spartacists, in the name of "the unity of the working class," supported the offensive of the government and the social democrats against women. This is where Spartacist logic leads on the woman question.

Turning their back on the women's movement, saying not a word on the Berber question, it is logical that the Spartacists reject student unionism. Once again, they confuse content and form. The central question for revolutionaries on campus is to defend the interests of working-class youth, the fight for the right to an education for all. In contrast to our ultraleftists, Lenin advocated intervention by revolutionaries in the student movement (including corporatist) in order that socialist ideas might triumph there. But for him the need for a separate organization of revolutionaries "in no way means to break with professional and university associations."

**c) Questions missing from the Spartacist critique**

Completely obsessed with putting forward their sectarian program and their denunciation of the PST as counterrevolutionary, the Spartacists have on the other hand nothing to say on such central questions as the organization of the party, concrete implantation in the working class, tactics of party-building. There are central questions which merit debate, such as the press: would it be better to have a fancy press organ which

appears rarely or a regular mimeographed bulletin? One could also think about the question of a class party based on the unions, a slogan which the PST completely misses. One could try to better define the place of the FOP [Front Ouvrier et Populaire, Workers and People's Front] in the party's strategy. A point on which the Spartacists make a lot of bad-faith denunciations but offer few perspectives. That essentially comes from the fact that they have an ultraleftist approach to the permanent revolution and to the tactic of the Anti-Imperialist United Front.

**d) On the tactic of the Anti-Imperialist United Front (AUF)**

The Spartacist tendency (ist, today ICL) is characterized by a vision of anti-imperialist struggle so narrow that it led them to sectarian abstentionism on such central questions as the Iranian Revolution or the Malvinas war. The AUF is essentially a tactic designed to unite the ranks of the oppressed while unmasking the revolutionary-nationalist leaderships which, in the conditions of the period, cannot carry this struggle through to the end. The position of Chawki and the PST on this point was essentially correct and it was entirely possible to pose hard questions to the FLN and to denounce it for its inaction. The AUF then turned against the coalition members and the government.

The AUF could lead to opportunist deviations if it serves as the pretext for a common program or a government of national unity (compare, for instance, the attitude of the PT). On the other hand, it is certainly possible to envisage concrete actions with petty-bourgeois organizations or governments of oppressed countries in a situation where for one reason or another they enter into struggle with imperialism. The Spartacists' ultra-leftist position is itself contradictory on this point since they reject the idea of a bloc with the FIS or the FLN in the Gulf War while proposing one with the Baghdad Ba'athist regime. According to them, standing fast on Saddam's trenches was correct, but attacking the imperialist coalition from behind its own lines would have been a popular-frontist betrayal. Figure that one out... If one leaves aside the verbiage about "strikes," the entire Spartacist policy during the Gulf War was in reality based on the idea that Iraq could win a military victory. By proposing "victory to Iraq" as a slogan in all countries, including France and the U.S., they once again (in accordance with their attitude on Russia and Poland) showed their lack of confidence in the working class. A method in the end very close to that of the contemptible "Pabloites."

In contrast, in a period (such as today) when the national bourgeoisie is not in conflict with the imperialist centers, no united front with it is possible, rather the opposite. The AUF thus means "a bloc of workers, peasants and the petty bourgeoisie directed not only against imperialism and feudalism but also against the national bourgeoisie which is linked to them on all essential questions" (Trotsky). It is in this framework that the slogan for a Workers and People's Front can be used, an application of the tactic to the concrete conditions of Algeria, repre-

senting the unity of all anti-imperialist and anti-governmental forces under the leadership of the party.

**6) From ultraleftism to complacency toward Zionism**

Even if they don't brag about it very much in the Maghreb (which is understandable), the Spartacists' ultraleftism serves as a convenient cover for refusing to defend self-determination for the Palestinians in the name of the theory of "interpenetration" of peoples and the fight against the Arab bourgeoisies. This led them to refuse to take the side of the Arabs in 1967 and 1972, and then in retrospect to criticize the Trotskyists' position on the 1948 war:

"The correct Trotskyist policy toward the 1948 Palestinian War was one of revolutionary defeatism (and exercise of self-defense by specific villages and settlements when under attack)."

--Spartacist League/U.S. CC motion,  
16 March 1974

In France, the Spartacists attempted to disrupt a JCR meeting on February 15 by screaming about "anti-Semitism" when the speaker led a round of applause for the Palestinian revolutionary George Habash, victim of a press campaign for having received medical treatment in France. In a 25 February 1992 letter to the LTF leadership, the JCR NB [National Bureau] exposed the real nature of the Spartacist policy:

"By using this part of our intervention to carry out your provocation you sought to split the people there (who did not let themselves be taken in) with racial criteria, which is particularly foul. You sought to counterpose Jews and Arabs. And this along the line of the Zionists and Mitterrand, by explicitly aligning yourselves with the media campaign against Habash. The PFLP represents the best of the Palestinian resistance.... Today the PFLP is still in the forefront of the combat against the U.S.-sponsored negotiations and the sellout of the struggle by the PLO leadership. That is why there was a Habash affair, wretchedly transmitted by you into our meeting.... It was under the accusation of 'collaboration with the PFLP' that the Zionist state repeatedly imprisoned our Jewish comrade Michael Warshawsky, a leader of the Israeli LCR! And neither he nor we are 'anti-Semites.' Nor are we among those who convey the Mossad's slanders about Habash's 'indiscriminate terrorism,' or its manipulations to make Arafat and Souss out to be 'anti-Semites'."

We bet that with their line on Palestine, the Spartacists are not about to build themselves anything serious in the Arab world... In any case they cannot claim to represent any "orthodox" alternative to the international USec majority, which is sliding more and more toward the "two states" position!

7) **Against sectarianism, for a real Trotskyist opposition to the USec's liquidationist course**

\* The Spartacist current appeared in the early sixties as a left (ultraleft?) split from the U.S. SWP, initially orienting toward the International Committee of Lambert and Healy. The existence of this current in 15 or so countries and its longevity give it a real existence even though its groups are tiny. The Spartacists even have an external faction in four countries which wants to "reform" them for having betrayed...Spartacism! This relative solidity essentially results from the shortcomings of the other international groupings claiming to be Trotskyist. While two of the principal ones (Lambertist CIR and USec) have the line of abandoning the construction of independent Trotskyist parties, and others (CIO, Militant and LIT) are in crisis, the Spartacists can hope to pick up some marginal pieces. A sectarian and ultraleftist current characterized by Zinovievist internal mores, the ICL is incapable of offering concrete perspectives in the crisis of the revolutionary movement.

\* This crisis is nonetheless quite real and necessitates engaging in battle for the theoretical and programmatic rearming of the Fourth International, for the regroupment of consistent Trotskyists. Such is the battle undertaken by the International Trotskyist Opposition which regroups militants in France, Great Britain, Italy, Denmark, Switzerland, the United States and Poland.

\* The Algerian PST is in a unique position in the world, not only in the USec but more generally. It is a young party, with an appreciable number of militants, which intervenes in an oppressed country shaken by recurrent political crises and where the ruling power is extremely fragile. It is a party that maintains a principled line in the events, a party toward which many eyes are turned. The principal Trotskyist force in North Africa and the Arab World. The engagement of the PST in the fight for the regeneration of the Fourth International would have a very important impact and would be seen by all as a signal. We hope to convince its militants and its leadership of this.

August 1992  
Damien Elliott

[Bracketed notes by Hate Trotskyism bulletin editors.]

## OPEN LETTER TO THE JCR-L'EGALITE

(Translated and slightly edited from Le Bolchévik No. 120, September 1992.)

Paris, 27 July 1992

To the comrades of the JCR-l'Egalité:

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." Despite the propagandists for the bourgeois lie that "communism is dead," this profound observation by Karl Marx is as true today as it was when he first made it, in the opening sentence of the 1848 Communist Manifesto. Today we are living in the midst of major upheavals of the international political landscape, centering on Germany and the Soviet Union, whose effects are being felt from South Africa and Latin America to Paris and Milano. This is the origin of the political ferment that your tendency is going through.

The JCR-l'Egalité, a left-wing tendency of the United Secretariat, has recently broken from its social-democratic mentor in the LCR, Matti. Matti has a long history as a perennial oppositionist in the USec, where his trademark is putting a (very thin) veneer of pseudo-orthodox formulations on top of increasingly rightist politics. In the last period, under the rubric of "champagne and democracy," Matti was hailing bourgeois "democratic" counterrevolution in East Europe. Now a few hundred young militants, repelled by the extent of the USec's liquidationism, have fought their way to an understanding that neither of the two major international USec factions--the Krivine-Mandel majority or the Matti minority--represents a palatable, much less revolutionary, leadership. But where do you go from there?

The last 12 years have witnessed the USec leadership and cadres chanting "Allah Akbar" behind the mullahs in the streets of Teheran, howling with the imperialist wolves over the Red Army's intervention in Afghanistan, and kneeling before the counterrevolutionary priests of Solidarność. "All the old crap," as Marx termed it, came together on Yeltsin's barricades in Moscow in August 1991, and some people in the JCR-l'Egalité balked at the LCR's hailing the counterrevolution. They just didn't like the idea of rubbing shoulders with the likes of the CIA and the pro-Nazi NTS. They do want to see themselves as Trotskyists.

The JCR-l'Egalité is at a crossroads. It is the hour of definitions. Which party do you want to build? The international Leninist vanguard or the LCR circa 1973? Trotsky said that the basic revolutionary principle is "to say what is." A revolutionary takes a clear, unambiguous stand on the burning questions of his day, knowing that:

"Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement, the only choice is--either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for mankind

has not created a 'third' ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or an above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree means to strengthen bourgeois ideology."

--Lenin, What Is To Be Done?

It is in this spirit that we read a series of interesting documents and articles on the Russian question which have been published since the JCR-l'Egalité's break with Matti's Tendency 13: "Neither Washington Nor Moscow Nor International Socialism: A Commentary on the 'Open Letter' to the JCR"; "Touvier's Case Thrown Out of Court: The Judges Reward an Exemplary Anti-Communist," l'Egalité No. 12, the JCR's Cahier d'Etudes Marxistes No. 3, entitled "In Defense of the October Revolution," which reprints large extracts of Cannon's speech, famous for his statement "We are the party of the Russian Revolution." Most recently there was an individual contribution by Damien Elliott published in pamphlet form [by the JCR] under the title "From the Fall of Stalinism to the Formation of the CIS," covering the crucial events of August 1991 and their aftermath. We noted a number of positive points. We also saw important contradictions, which is what we wish to address here.

### **The Myth of the August Mass Mobilization**

So, to begin with: the "Russian question," touchstone for Trotskyism. Time is running out in the Soviet Union. If the present lack of resistance to the introduction of capitalism persists on the part of the working class in Russia and the other former Soviet republics, and if the Russian government succeeds in decisively subordinating to its counterrevolutionary course the armed forces nominally under its command, the result will be the destruction of the workers state.

In recent JCR publications, the comrades state unambiguously that Yeltsin's August counter-coup unleashed a spiral of counter-revolution: "...we are all agreed in characterizing the Yeltsin team as 100% reactionary and pro-bourgeois, seeking to destroy the working-class character of the state," ("Neither Washington Nor Moscow Nor International Socialism"). This contrasts sharply and favorably with l'Egalité's characterization of the August events in the September 1991 article, "Hope on the March." But now, seeing the bitter reality, what stand does the JCR-l'Egalité take, what had to be done?

There are several important contradictions in the JCR pamphlet, "From the Fall of Stalinism to the Formation of the CIS," and a failure to draw clear programmatic conclusions from the analysis that the Yeltsin forces were counterrevolutionary. To begin with, Damien Elliott says that "the putsch was broken by the resistance of a determined part of the population of the big cities." He implies that these same people were then duped into supporting Yeltsin by "the absence of powerful workers organizations," and even lauds the efforts of the KAS-KOR and some pseudo-Trotskyists who joined the barricades, regretting only

that their forces were "extremely weak" and unable to win this "determined part of the population" away from Yeltsin.

But in fact there was no significant opposition to the Kremlin coup among the Soviet working masses, even at the level of popular attitudes. Even the USec belatedly recognized this, all the while vicariously climbing atop Yeltsin's barricades. Yeltsin's immediate call for a general strike went almost totally unheeded. One of the more perceptive Soviet anti-Communist ideologues, Aleksandr Tsipko, wrote shortly after the coup:

"But millions of people, the overwhelming majority of society, were indifferent toward the coup. Had the conspirators been able to hold out and to throw enough food into the markets, the people would have reconciled themselves quite rapidly to the new conservative government.... Only an enterprising minority supports the restoration of capitalism and the market economy that has begun in this country."

### Which Side Are You On?

While recognizing August 1991 as a counterrevolutionary turning point, Elliott treats Yeltsin as a pro-perestroika bureaucrat, where in fact he was the spearhead of the imperialist-backed counterrevolutionary offensive, on the phone hour by hour taking direct orders from Bush and the CIA, and he disappears the differences between the contending forces, as if they were all equally counterrevolutionary: "On the level of economic program, the putschists did not have a plan qualitatively different from those of Gorbachev or Yeltsin."

The putschists, like Gorbachev, wanted to carry out perestroika with the bureaucracy as social base--but without glasnost--in the hopes of safeguarding their bureaucratic privileges, which would have eventually but inevitably opened the door to capitalist counterrevolution. Yeltsin's "program" was to be a direct agent for the imperialists. The Kremlin Stalinists made no attempt to suppress their main antagonist, Boris Yeltsin, for fear of offending the Western powers and even more so of igniting a civil war, which would have unleashed social forces they could not control. The imperialist bourgeoisie grasped this long-awaited opportunity to destroy the governing apparatus of the Soviet Union.

Elliott is quite categorical on the point that Yeltsin's coup unleashed the counterrevolution, but by equating the social forces represented by Yeltsin, the putschists and Gorbachev, and by implying that those few thousands actually on the Yeltsin barricades were "winnable," Elliott implies that it didn't matter if they supported Yeltsin. In a soft way, he wants to be with the "masses" who were on the Yeltsin barricades. He thinks that Yeltsin is a counterrevolutionary, but he wants to "fraternize" with his shock troops instead of smashing them!

At the time of the lamentable comic-opera putsch, we Spartacists of the International Communist League (Fourth Internation-

alist), the ICL, wrote that a call on the Moscow workers to sweep away the rabble manning the Yeltsin barricades and to drive back the counterrevolution was in order. Our comrades distributed thousands of leaflets with this hard position at Moscow and Leningrad factories in the weeks following Yeltsin's coup. It would not have taken much. Several thousand workers from one factory could have done the job. If such a mobilization had occurred, it would have been the beginning of the political revolution, which is exactly why the putschists told the workers to stay in the factories.

At the end of the pamphlet, Elliott says that "The dénouement of the contradiction in one direction or another will essentially depend on the capacity of the workers of the ex-USSR to organize themselves and, more broadly, on the capacity of an international revolutionary vanguard to profit from the opportunities in the situation...." But the working class is completely absent from his calculations on the August putsch and counter-coup. It is therefore no wonder that he has written off the Soviet Union as already capitalist. The August putsch was in fact the last gasp of Stalinism, and Elliott has only inconsistently broken with the Stalinophobic equation: Stalinist bureaucratic caste equals workers state.

Fundamental to all opportunism is the loss of confidence in the working class as the agent of revolution. The Stalinist bureaucracy did not split in August 1991 because the Soviet working class had not entered the arena to struggle in its own name; the bureaucracy has been pulled in only one direction. In his 1933 article, "The Class Nature of the Soviet State," Trotsky again explains the contradictory and unstable nature of the bureaucracy:

"A real civil war could develop not between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the resurgent proletariat but between the proletariat and the active forces of the counterrevolution. In the event of an open clash between the two mass camps, there cannot even be talk of the bureaucracy playing an independent role. Its polar flanks would be flung to the different sides of the barricade."

#### **"Canada Dry" Spartacism**

Elliott is quite correct when he writes:

"The unfolding of events has totally swept away the different theories which attributed a progressive role to the Soviet bureaucracy or, on the contrary, claimed that it had been transformed into a new exploiting class. In reality, the bureaucracy was never anything other than a parasitic caste...."

He also correctly notes that Stalinism had a "dual role," a concept that was anathema to Matti, who claimed that Stalinism was counterrevolutionary through and through. Elliott characterizes Gorbachev's retreat from Afghanistan as a "sellout" and he adopts

the position outlined by Trotsky in the Transitional Program of "the possibility, in strictly defined instances, of a 'united front' with the Thermidorian section of the bureaucracy against open attack by capitalist counter-revolution." Given the dominant position among the pseudo-Trotskyists that the main enemy was Stalinism, not imperialism, and their Stalinophobic blocs with any counterrevolutionary force fighting against the workers states, these positions are significant. But what do they mean concretely?

We of the ICL wrote that:

"The coup plotters were not only irresolute but didn't want to unleash the forces that could have defeated the more extreme counterrevolutionaries, for that could have led to a civil war if the Yeltsinites really fought back. And in an armed struggle pitting outright restorationists against recalcitrant elements of the bureaucracy, defense of the collectivized economy would have been placed on the agenda whatever the Stalinists' intentions. Trotskyists would have entered a "'united front" with the Thermidorian section of the bureaucracy against open attack by capitalist counter-revolution," as Trotsky wrote in the Transitional Program."

--"Matti Gets Drunk on the Champagne of 'Democracy'--The JCR Toasts and Gets the Hangover," LTF leaflet, 14 February 1992

This was precisely our policy toward Jaruzelski in 1981. Elliott foresees the possibility of a "'united front' with the Thermidorian section of the bureaucracy against open attack by capitalist counter-revolution." And then there is the policy offered by Franco Grisolia, who writes that "If sectors of the working class had rallied in support of the coup, wanting to struggle against austerity and other moves toward capitalist restoration, Trotskyists should have allied with them" ("For a Workers Emergency Plan," January 1992). Are these positions all the same?

No indeed, for the policy put forward by Grisolia and in effect by Elliott is one of abstention at the time of the coup. Thus Grisolia puts it passively--"if sectors of the working class had rallied..."--instead of calling on the workers to smash the Yeltsinite barricades, thereby opening the door to political revolution and offering a military bloc to those wings of the bureaucracy that were willing to fight. "In the coup as it actually developed," writes Grisolia, "the coup leaders failed to rally the workers, were unable to cope with the problems of having 'seized power,' and lost their nerve." Since the bureaucracy didn't move, he is for a "neutral" position in the face of counterrevolution: "No support to any faction of the Soviet bureaucracy. Mobilize the working class independently." Against whom?! And the JCR? In your pamphlet, "From the Fall of Stalinism to the Formation of the CIS," we read about the counterrevolutionary consequences of August 1991, but comrades, you must answer: what should have been the policy of Trotskyists at that key moment?

## He Who Says "A" Must Say "B"

Just one not-so-small point. In his pamphlet, Elliott warns against elements of the American AFL-CIO who are trying to make the miners union (NPG) into "a new Solidarność, in the worst sense of the term." Do tell, comrades, what is "the worst sense" of Solidarność? Today it is obvious to everyone that the Solidarność government of capitalist Poland is starving the workers, eliminating women from the workforce by abolishing abortion, and destroying industry. But from the beginning Solidarność promised nothing less than capitalist counterrevolution. And only the international Spartacist tendency (now the ICL) said it in 1981!

Certain members of the JCR-l'Egalité are for blocs with the Stalinist bureaucracy against open counterrevolution. It was necessary to stop Solidarność' counterrevolution in 1981, and to bloc militarily with General Jaruzelski. This is the path of Trotskyism. Where do you stand on this crucial turning point of the Cold War?

### Democracy

JCR-l'Egalité broke with Matti over the question of democracy: "The Manifesto [of Matti's Tendency 13] raises the question of democracy without making any distinction between workers democracy and bourgeois democracy," (David, "Minority of Tendency 13: Fundamental Questions," Rouge, 5 December 1991). But on such a fundamental question, which goes to the heart of the difference between reformism and revolution, at first there were absolutely no programmatic conclusions drawn. Rather the reverse. It is no accident that David claimed, in the name of the Boniface-Damien-David T13 minority amendment to the T13 manifesto for the LCR's Tenth conference, to be still in agreement with Matti on the crucial programmatic conclusions of support to the counterrevolution in the East: "Faced with the Ligue majority, our tendency has been united since 1989 in insisting on the eminently progressive character of the democratic aspirations of the masses in the East." Matti preached the glories of bourgeois democracy because he was, with the imperialists, in favor of smashing the workers states. His "anti-Stalinism" was that of the imperialists. Before Stalinism, Karl Kautsky also preached the glories of bourgeois democracy against the dictatorship of the proletariat, as he joined the imperialists' campaign to destroy the fledgling workers state in 1918.

Marxists start from the assertion that there are two fundamental classes in society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Stalinism represented a parasitic excrescence resting on the proletarian property forms that resulted from the October 1917 Revolution, a conservative reaction to the ebb of world revolution after the defeat in Germany in 1923 and the encirclement of the Soviet Union by hostile imperialist powers. It found programmatic expression with the proclamation of Stalin's "theory" of socialism in one country. Stalinism had no independent existence, as the events in the East since 1989 have amply demonstrated.

Further in this same Rouge article, David completely buys Matti's cynical identification of Trotskyism with simple "democracy." He commits an outright historical falsification in the process when he writes that "democracy, that's been its [Trotskyism's] calling card in the face of Stalinism since the '20s." The Left Opposition fought for the restoration of party and soviet democracy after the political counterrevolution of 1923-24 [in the Soviet Union]. But Trotsky's fight against Stalinism was never based fundamentally on a "lack of democracy." In fact, in the early 1930s, when he was trying to cohere the cadres of the Left Opposition outside Russia during his exile in Turkey, he refused to collaborate with those militants who had such a liberal conception. The crucial programmatic criteria at that time were: 1) the policy of the Anglo-Russian Committee; 2) the course of the Chinese Revolution; 3) the economic policy of the USSR in conjunction with the theory of socialism in one country. In a letter to his cothinkers around this time, Trotsky explained why "democracy" was not among these criteria:

"Some comrades may be astonished that I omit reference here to the question of the party regime. I do so not out of oversight, but deliberately.... For a Marxist, democracy within a party or within a country is not an abstraction. Democracy is always conditioned by the struggle of living forces. By bureaucratism, the opportunist elements in part and as a whole understand revolutionary centralism. Obviously, they cannot be our cothinkers."

--"Groupings in the Communist  
Opposition," 31 March 1929

### **No Vote to the Workers Parties in a Popular Front! The Question of Class Independence**

Recently, in the JCR-l'Egalité Parisian day school, the organization's principal public spokesman, Damien Elliott, spoke of Trotsky's struggle against the popular front. He lauded the work of the iSt-ICL on this question, referring to Spartacist (French edition) No. 15-16, in which a series of articles explain and motivate our position of conditional electoral opposition to the workers parties in a popular front, like Allende in Chile in 1971 and Mitterrand in France. These articles are transcriptions of a panel discussion on the popular front at the iSt's first delegated international conference in 1979, where we had debated with veteran Sri Lankan Trotskyist Edmund Samarakkody, with whom we had been carrying on unification negotiations and who was in favor of voting for the workers parties in a popular front. In this discussion Samarakkody himself made it clear that he renounced his principled 1964 action, when he voted in Parliament against the popular-front government, leading to its downfall. Damien Elliott also supported Edmund Samarakkody's principled act of voting against the popular front in 1964 in Sri Lanka, and declared that his personal position was against voting for the PCF or SP in the upcoming elections as long as they did not break with Mitterrand.

In 1970, the Spartacists took the line that in Chile, "Any 'critical support' to the Allende coalition is class treason, paving the way for a bloody defeat for the Chilean working people..." (Spartacist [English edition] No. 19). This is of course exactly what came to pass. We warned that Mitterrand's Union of the Left would be pro-NATO, anti-worker and anti-immigrant. Judge for yourselves what happened. The LTF never called for a vote to any of the parties of the Union of the Left. We called for critical electoral support to the PCF, which in 1980, at the beginning of the Cold War, was running independently of the popular front--until the racist atrocity at Vitry in January 1981 showed that they would stop at nothing to be invited into this bourgeois coalition.

The tactic of critical electoral support to a bourgeois workers party was elaborated by Lenin in 'Left-Wing' Communism--An Infantile Disorder. It was a tactic designed to exploit the contradiction between these parties' pretensions to represent a class alternative to the bourgeois parties and the fact that their reformist practice ties them to the preservation of capitalism, a tactic designed to split the base from the top, a tactic to be considered when these parties present themselves independently, in their own name. But this contradiction between the bourgeois workers parties' formal claim to be socialist and their actual practice is suppressed when these parties sign an electoral agreement with bourgeois parties, however small and symbolic these may be. The bourgeois workers parties thus announce in advance that they will not go beyond the confines of capitalism. Allende's Unidad Popular included a promise not to touch the bourgeois officer corps, and one of Mitterrand's first actions was to amnesty the rebellious generals of the Algerian War, underlining that the bourgeois state rests on armed bodies of men defending capitalist property forms. When the contradictions of the bourgeois workers parties are suppressed in a class-collaborationist coalition, the only principled policy for revolutionaries is to refuse them any kind of electoral support. Class independence is the touchstone for revolutionaries.

What is the question of the popular front? It is the question of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution! Those who vote for the workers parties in a popular front would in 1917 have supported a government of the Mensheviks and the Trudoviks, a regime of counterrevolution. There would have been no October Revolution; the fate of the world hung on the Bolshevik Party's intransigent opposition to the workers parties in the popular front.

In comrade Elliott's June presentation, despite his radical analysis, his silence was deafening on the question of the 1981 vote. Where do you stand, comrades? On voting for the PCF and SP in 1981? On voting for Mitterrand in 1974? On voting for Allende in 1970?

Again on this question, Grisolia's tendency is an example of "all that glitters is not gold." In 1975-76 he proposed joining the international Spartacist tendency, but maintained a clear position in favor of voting for the workers parties in the

popular front. Indeed, the newspaper of his Gruppo Bolscevico-Leninista (GBL), Il Militante (October 1976), published a "Letter to Workers Vanguard" (newspaper of our American section) remarking: "Notoriously, your organization has the strange opinion that electoral support to a workers party that is part of or implicated in a popular front, or inclined toward it, is equivalent to capitulation to the same popular front." What a strange "opinion"! Grisolia's maneuverist idea of a healthy opinion was his stand in the 1976 Italian election, where the Italian Communist Party was running on the basis of the "Historic Compromise," a proposal for a popular front running from the CP to the Christian Democracy. Grisolia's GBL had a position to the right of the Italian USec section. The USec called for a vote for Democrazia Proletaria (DP), which on paper opposed the "Historic Compromise" although it held open the door for a more left version of the popular front, while Grisolia announced that he would give "critical support" to the PCI against DP unless another "far-left" group, Lotta Continua, was included in DP's "far-left" slate!

### **Unprincipled Combinationism--A Crime Against the Party**

This brings us to the party question. The crisis of humanity is the crisis of revolutionary leadership. This is the essence of the Transitional Program. And, comrades, here we would like to speak to you from our own experience. For some of us have gone through the process you are now facing.

JCR-1'Egalité represents the first left-wing tendency in the LCR since the Tendency 4 of the early '70s, before Cold War II. This tendency was basically defined by the fact that it had leftist positions, but refused to draw the sharp programmatic conclusions from them, somewhat like the JCR-1'Egalité today. Some who later founded the LTF were members of Tendency 4. This tendency was formed mainly in opposition to the Mandel-Krivine-Maitan international majority's capitulation to the popular front in France and elsewhere, but it was a very heterogeneous tendency, including (a) supporters of the reformist American SWP; (b) supporters of Lambert; (c) a centrist swamp, Nemo, Ulysse & Co., who went on to provoke a left split over Nicaragua in 1979, but then maneuvered the resulting organization, the LCI, into the straitjacket of the Stalinophobic, by then reformist, OCI; and (d) those who drew the programmatic conclusions from T4's formally orthodox analysis of the majority's popular-frontism and went on to found the LTF in 1975 (see Spartacist [French edition] Nos. 9 and 10).

Lambert, who did have a coherent Stalinophobic program, was able to smash up Tendency 4. Why? Because the majority of this tendency did not draw programmatic conclusions from their rather abstract criticisms of the majority, and refused to investigate and politically characterize their international bloc partners, the reformist American SWP. When the Portuguese revolution broke out in 1975, many of the T4 cadres followed the SWP's and OCI's Stalinophobic line of support to the CIA-financed Portuguese social democracy (supporting the burning of CP headquarters, for

example, as an example of "mass outrage"). They were later easy prey for Lambert's wrecking operation.

And rather analogous to the choices facing Tendency 4 before the USec's 1974 Tenth World Congress, the heterogeneous USec tendency JCR-1'Egalité is in leftward motion, poised between two possibilities: either a slide back into the shadow of the popular front (for proof, see Tendency 4), or a definitive break with social democracy and the struggle to construct the world party of socialist revolution--the Spartacist road (for proof, see Tendency 4).

Many of you have read Trotsky's work In Defense of Marxism. Fewer are familiar with James P. Cannon's companion volume, The Struggle for a Proletarian Party, which collected his speeches and writings in the 1940 faction fight in the SWP against Shachtman, Abern and Burnham. Reacting to the petty-bourgeois public outcry over the Hitler-Stalin pact, they went into opposition against the party's unconditional military defense of the Soviet workers state--while holding three distinct positions on the class nature of the Soviet Union. James P. Cannon has the following to say about the primacy of the struggle for program and the "evil of combinationism":

"The opposition is the worst and most disloyal of all types of factional formations in a revolutionary workers' party: an unprincipled combination. Combinationism is the worst offense against the party because it cuts across the lines of political principle; it aims at an organizational decision which leaves the political and principled disputes unclarified and undecided. Thus, insofar as the combinationist struggle is successful, it hampers the education of the party and prevents a solution of the dispute on a principled basis. Unprincipled combinationism is in every case the denotation of petty-bourgeois politics. It is the antithesis to the Marxist method of political struggle.

"Marxists always begin with the program. They rally supporters around the program and educate them in its meaning in the process of the struggle. The political victories of the Marxists are always in the first place victories for their program. The organizational phase of the victory in every case, from the election of a definite slate of candidates in a party faction fight up to and including the seizure of power in an armed struggle, always has one and the same significance: to provide the means and the instrument for carrying out the political program. Marxist politics is principled politics. This explains, among other things, the homogeneity of the Marxist formation, regardless of whether it is a faction in a party on a small scale, or a full-fledged and fully developed party directly facing the parties of the class enemy. It is this homogeneity of the Marxist organization which makes possible its firm discipline, its centralization and its striking power."

The JCR-l'Egalité left tendency has been in a bloc for several years with the most right-wing member of the LCR Political Bureau, Matti. Your belated break with Matti is to your credit, but it is only a first step.

### **The Fight for Revolutionary Continuity**

The continuity of the Spartacist tendency, the ICL, with Cannon and the Left Opposition is slender but real, passing through the 1961 Revolutionary Tendency of the American SWP. The ICL fights for the reforging of the Fourth International, destroyed by Pabloite revisionism. The origins of the Spartacist tendency go back to the old split between the International Secretariat and the International Committee in the 1950s, and the reunification of 1963. We support the partial but principled fight of the International Committee against the Pabloite International Secretariat. With the cleavage in the IC, between the French OCI of Lambert and the British SLL of Healy on the one hand, and the American SWP (which was seeking reunification with the European Pabloite International Secretariat) on the other, and with Pablo going out at about the same time, we fought it out on the issues of Cuba, Pabloism and Stalinism.

We became convinced that the main international currents of ostensible Trotskyism were moribund--fundamentally, programmatically moribund, and in a few other ways besides--not to mention various international characters such as the highly dubious Hungarian Varga and the third world warrior Posadas. So we necessarily came to the perspective that we had to fight for the rebirth of the Fourth International, not the reshuffling ("reconstruction," or "regeneration," as the Grisolia tendency calls for) of the Fourth International. It was necessary that we go through these testing experiences because it is always necessary to build the new from the revolutionary qualities and surviving cadres of the old. And, in fact, there was a surviving minor fragment in the United States, the Revolutionary Tendency of the SWP, which became the core of the Spartacist tendency. The continuity of today's USec lies with those, like Pierre Frank and Ernest Mandel, whose liquidationism of the party Cannon fought in 1953.

As you have gathered from this letter, we think that the current political developments in the JCR-l'Egalité are serious and important. We think we have a lot of things to say to one another. We propose that we jointly organize a debate in the month of September in Paris. Our suggested topic is "What program for Trotskyist revolutionaries today?"

Since 1917, the three touchstones for those who would resolve the crisis of leadership have been: class independence; the defense of the workers' gains, the Russian question; and the

party. The struggle for political principle and programmatic clarity is sometimes arduous, but the stakes demand nothing less. We have a world to win. For the reforging of the Fourth International!

Revolutionary greetings,  
Ligue Trotskyste de France

## Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League

— a bulletin series of opponent material

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

“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 (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

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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 Workers League and the  
International Committee: A Statement by  
Tim Wohlforth,” 11 January 1975

Reprint of “The Wohlforth League:  
Counterfeit Trotskyists”

— From *Spartacist* No. 17-18, August-September 1970

Reprint of “Confessions of a ‘Renegade’:  
Wohlforth Terminated”

— From *Workers Vanguard* No. 61, 31 January 1975

### Bulletin No. 4

Winter 1986, \$1 (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”

### Bulletin No. 5

July 1988, \$2 (26 pages)

Letter to *Workers Vanguard* by Cathy Nason for  
the Bolshevik Tendency, 8 April 1988

“On the Slogan ‘Marines Out of Lebanon, Now,  
Alive’: Reuben’s Tangled Web”

— From *Bulletin of the External Tendency of the iSt* No. 2,  
January 1984

“BT Says Don’t Hail Red Army in Afghanistan”  
— From *Workers Vanguard* No. 449, 25 March 1988

“WV Flinches on 007: A Textbook Example”

— From *Bulletin of the External Tendency of the iSt* No. 2,  
January 1984

“BT Protests Too Much” (reply from letters  
column)

— From *Workers Vanguard* No. 453, 20 May 1988

“Challenger’s ‘Major Malfunction’: No Disaster for  
the Working Class”

— From *1917* No. 2, Summer 1986

ET Statement of 12 November 1983: “A Loss of  
Nerve and a Loss of Will”

— From *Bulletin of the External Tendency of the iSt* No. 2,  
January 1984

“Marxism and Bloodthirstiness”

— From *Workers Vanguard* No. 345, 6 January 1984

### Bulletin No. 6

March 1991, \$2 (16 pages)

“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

“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

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