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# Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League

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—a bulletin series of opponent material

## NUMBER 12

English-language translation of “Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacists” Bulletin No. 1, published by the Spartacist Group of Poland (SGP), section of the International Communist League (Fourth-Internationalist)

## ICL Trotskyism vs. Mandelite “Left” Polish Nationalism

### Introduction

### On the Spartacist Renegades

Reprint of a polemic by a supporter of the NLR [Revolutionary Left Current], undated, distributed in December 1998

### For New October Revolutions!

### ICL Trotskyism vs. Mandelite “Left” Polish Nationalism

Reply of the Spartacist Group of Poland, 14 March 1999

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# Introduction

*The content of this bulletin is an English-language translation of "Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacists" Bulletin No. 1, published in March 1999 by the Spartacist Group of Poland (SGP), section of the International Communist League (Fourth-Internationalist).*

This bulletin, contains an exchange of documents with a member of Nurt Lewicy Rewolucyjnej (NLR, Current of Revolutionary Left)/*Dalej!*, which is affiliated to the late Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec). The first two items in this bulletin are "On the Spartacist Renegades, Part 1 and 2," both undated, but circulated in late December 1998/early January 1999. Our reproductions of this material are taken straight from the originals; responsibility for all typographical, spelling and punctuation errors lies with the author. The SGP's response, dated 14 March 1999, makes up the last item in this bulletin.

This is the first "Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacists" bulletin published in the Polish language. It continues the traditions of our comrades of the Spartacist League/U.S. of producing material hostile to our tendency written by ostensibly Marxist opponent organizations. This series has allowed us to make available to our members and others interested in our organization, representative arguments against our politics, particularly by left-sounding centrists and critics.

The first number in this series of the SL/U.S., dated March 1975, 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 those days, when the Mandelites were enthusing over the Vietnamese National Liberation Front and posturing as armchair *guerrillaists*, we were reviled for not embracing Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro as modern-day equivalents of the Bolsheviks Lenin and Trotsky. At that time the USec claimed the Spartacists were "Stalinophobes," charging that we deemed the degenerated and deformed workers states "unworthy of unconditional defense against imperialism (third campism)." One selection from this document reads as follows:

"The Spartacists' conception of deformed workers states as being only slightly 'superior' to capitalism, and qualitatively inferior to healthy workers' states, leads to the same kind of sectarian third campism in practice. It leads to underestimating the gains for the masses which a

workers state of any kind represents: protection against the armies of imperialism and native capitalism, the tremendous development of productive forces, witnessed in Eastern Europe and China, for example."

The reader of course will observe that the NLR polemicist's main attack against us today comes from a *diametrically opposite viewpoint*: he accuses us of being apologists for the Stalinist bureaucracy. But it is not our politics that have changed. The ICL (formerly the international Spartacist tendency) has remained consistent in its adherence to Trotskyism. The USec, however, has tailed whatever political movement is trendy at a given moment in petty-bourgeois radical circles. In the 1950s they broke from Trotskyism, preaching that the Stalinist leaderships would be forced by objective pressures to play a revolutionary role. In the 1960s and 1970s, they hailed "new mass vanguards" such as bourgeois feminism and student power. In the late 1970s and 1980s, they became the biggest cheerleaders for counter-revolutionary forces that sought the destruction of the Soviet Union, from Khomeini's Islamic guards in Iran to Solidarność in Poland. They rejoiced at Boris Yeltsin's victory in the USSR which ushered in the destruction of the Soviet workers state. In order to avoid responsibility for this betrayal of the interests of the working class, the USec now denies that the counter-revolution has actually taken place, while giving political support to the pro-capitalist social democrats.

We believe the counterposition of the ICL's Trotskyist program to the "left" Polish nationalism espoused by the USec in Poland will be a useful guide to all those seeking the road to authentic communism in Poland and internationally today.

As supplementary reading to this bulletin, we refer our readers to our earlier polemic against the USec entitled "USec's Nationalization Fetishism," published in *Platforma Spartakusowców* No. 4, Summer-Fall 1993, which takes up the USec's line that the former Soviet Union is still a workers state. English-speaking readers are also referred to *Spartacist* No. 52 (Autumn 1995), which contains a political obituary of Mandel, as well as the presentations, summaries and some excerpts from the discussion at a debate between Mandel and Joseph Seymour of the ICL in New York City on 11 November 1994.

—16 March 1999

# On the Spartacist Renegades

## Part One

To introduce the topic I'll point out at once that the sense of this polemic may seem doubtful in view of the fact that its subject, i.e., the Spartacists, are outside the workers movement. Lenin polemicized with the ultra-leftoids, the economists, the Kautskyists, etc. only because these currents represented a real part of the workers movement, thus their ideological effect on the working class could have catastrophic results from the viewpoint of the interests of world revolution. I decided to take up a polemic against the Spartacists not because they have a negative influence on the working class (as fortunately they have no influence at all on the latter) but because they could have a negative influence on a few people who declare their openness to revolutionary Marxism, take part in the informal debate going on between the SGP, *Solidarność Socjalistyczna* (now Employee Democracy) and NLR (Mandelites). In this informal debate, both the SGP and SS use punches against the NLR that are below the belt, using lies, misrepresentations, etc. They even resort (especially the SGP) to censoring Trotsky's writings, despite the hagiographic interludes regarding him in their papers. The Spartacists also sow a great deal of ideological muddle, create lots of confusion around their own sect, disorient external observers and compromise the revolutionary left in the eyes of its potential participants. The theoretical mess served up by Platforma Spartakusowców stands in blatant opposition to the elementary principles of Trotskyism and Marxism as a whole.

The theoretical errors of the Spartacists derive in a considerable degree from a failure to understand the nature of the degenerated/deformed workers states, the nature of the bureaucracies of the workers countries, the relation of the bureaucracy to the class foundations of the workers state, the dual nature of the bureaucracy, etc. In order to demonstrate the error of the theories publicized by the SGP, the focus must be placed on these vitally important questions.

In politically expropriating the Soviet proletariat the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy did not carry out a counter-revolution, in that it did not replace the mode of production (and the type of social relations which go with it) proper to the dictatorship of the proletariat by a new mode of production and a new type of social relations proper to the rule of some new social class. The bureaucracy was thus not rooted in a mode of production different from that of the proletariat. We thus were dealing with a political counterrevolution, a Thermidorian overthrow, rather than a social counterrevolution. The degenerated Soviet workers state remained a workers state to the degree that its class basis and the social gains connected with this, which resulted from the October Revolution, were not overthrown by the bureaucracy and replaced by different ones. Conclu-

sion: the USSR and other states in which capitalism was overthrown, introducing into them the same kind of economic-social relations, were workers states to the degree that as states they remained on the basis of, and sometimes even defended, the class foundations whose genesis traces back to the October Revolution, i.e., to the degree that they remained based on the anti-capitalist planned economy (the social gains in the workers states were inseparably linked with the planned, non-capitalist character of the economies of these states). By way of analogy, as Trotsky wrote, we are dealing with the true dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia not from the moment at which the Soviets seized power, but from the moment at which the bourgeoisie was expropriated, the economy was nationalized and capitalism was replaced by a planned economy, i.e., since 1918.

The bureaucracy as a ruling and parasitic layer in the workers country in this way possessed a dual character: on one side, in consolidating its privileges it undermined the proletarian class foundations of the workers state and the social gains associated with it, forcing political passivity on the proletariat, not permitting it to take part in the planning process; the bureaucracy compromised the workers own state in the eyes of the workers, leading a downright counterrevolutionary international policy; it turned the working masses of the capitalist countries against the program of world revolution, and through all this it drifted unconsciously toward capitalism, toward counterrevolution; on the other hand, on many occasions it stood in defense of the class foundations which were created by October, besides which the Soviet bureaucracy succeeded in overthrowing capitalism in several countries (it's not important here to go into the reasons it did this), many economic decisions which it took were dictated by the interests of the toiling masses, etc. However, all its progressive potential did not reside in [the bureaucracy] itself, but in the planned economy which it exclusively administered.

The failure to understand this ABC of Trotskyism has led the Spartacists to transform the demand for the defense of the workers state (regarding Poland) into a demand for the defense of the bureaucracy itself against the working class. Defense of the workers state according to Trotsky and the Fourth International, however, doesn't mean defending the rule of the bureaucracy over the proletariat in the workers country, but the defense of the class economic foundations of the workers state, the non-capitalist planned economy and its gains against imperialism and against internal pro-capitalist tendencies (this may sometimes mean a tactical alliance with the bureaucracy as a whole, or its healthier elements, since the bureaucracy is not a monolithic entity). The postulate of defense of the workers state is also

dialectically linked (for the opponent of dialectics these postulates may appear mutually incompatible) with the postulate of anti-bureaucratic political revolution, aiming at the return/introduction of workers democracy: "...either the bureaucracy, becoming ever more the instrument of the world bourgeoisie in the workers state, will overthrow the new property forms and throw the country back into capitalism, or the working class will rout the bureaucracy and open the road to socialism" (Leon Trotsky, "Transitional Program"). The workers country thus requires defense not only against imperialism, but against the more and more pro-capitalist bureaucracy. For a Trotskyist, the defense of the workers state means the defense of the mode of production corresponding to the dictatorship of the proletariat, from which the bureaucracy has not yet managed to free itself. For a Trotskyist, the workers state can be defended in the long term only by the working class (and only for the working class), and not by divorcing oneself from the working class through a putsch or a conspiracy of Polish and DDR generals. For the Spartacists, in contrast, defense of the workers state means defense of Kiszczak and Jaruzelski, while the basic question, i.e., defense of the planned economy and its gains against the capitalist counterrevolution, doesn't exist for the Spartacists. The defense of the non-capitalist economy, defense of jobs, free education and health care is, according to them, pure reformism. For the SGP the greatest tragedy is not the restoration of capitalism, the attacks of Balcerowicz on the workers, but the fall of Kiszczak and Jaruzelski, since now that they've fallen we have capitalism, and since we have capitalism, it's all the same if there will be privatization or not. The state sector is no different (since we no longer have Rakowski and Jaruzelski) from the private sector; it's also all the same how many workers lose their jobs. Those who call on the workers to defend jobs and free social services are reformists. Real revolutionaries, now that Kiszczak and Jaruzelski have retired, consider the struggle to have been lost, and withdraw from politics in order to occupy themselves with nursing the revolutionary program, conserving it until "better times" approach.

Thus what a lousy reformist Trotsky must have been, for whom, even under the conditions of bourgeois rule, the issue of the relation of the state sector to the private sector wasn't at all a matter of indifference. The postulate of nationalization of specific groups of capital by the bourgeois state, and the attending postulate of maintaining those branches of industry already nationalized by the state is, according to Trotsky, one of the transitional demands. We refer those interested in this question to read the "Transitional Program" (chapters: "Expropriation of Specific Groups of Capitalists", "Expropriation of Private Banks and Nationalization of the Credit System").

The error of the Spartacists consists of failing to understand 1) why the economies of the workers states did not have a capitalist character, and 2) why the restoration of capitalism is not a one-time action, but a process. The economies of the USSR, the Polish People's

Republic, etc. were non-capitalist because, together with the liquidation of the bourgeoisie as a social class, together with the nationalization of industry, the capitalist law of value, which in capitalist countries is the main regulator of the economy, was overthrown. In the planned economies it was not the law of competition, not the tendency to maximize profit, but the necessity to satisfy definite social needs, the tendency to resolve definite problems, etc. which had a decisive character in economics (in these economies health services, education, housing, etc. did not represent commodities). Accumulation in the workers country thus has a completely different character than accumulation in capitalist countries. The restoration of capitalism, and not merely the capitalist state (two things which should not be confused), requires getting to the point where the main regulator of the economy would again be the capitalist law of value, rather than administrative decisions taken by state officials. The bourgeois state, of which we can speak in Poland since 1989, is a bourgeois state to the degree that it conducts the counterrevolutionary policy of destroying the anti-capitalist planned economy in the interest of the reborn bourgeoisie, under the diktat of world imperialism, for the purpose of establishing the capitalist mode of production. In just the same way, we speak of the Russian workers state after the revolution, but prior to 1918, in the sense that as a state, i.e., as a political power, it strove for the liquidation of capitalism and the establishment of the proletarian planned mode of production (a dictatorship of the proletariat in the political sense, as was the Paris Commune). The restoration of capitalism is not, as the Spartacists would have it, a one-time action, but a process having its own inner dialectic. A planned economy which produces (to a greater or lesser extent) for the satisfaction of definite social needs, can't be transformed in a single day into a capitalist economy based on the striving of individual capitalists to maximize their profits. Whether or not we are dealing with capitalism is not decided by the fact that one nomenclature is replaced by another (the bureaucracy of a comprador bourgeois state has replaced the bureaucracy of a workers state), but by concrete socio-economic processes. While we Mandelites attempt to counteract these processes, calling on the workers to struggle with the counterrevolutionary restoration of capitalism, the Spartacist self-styled revolutionaries shamelessly capitulate, stating that the fight ended the moment generals Jaruzelski and Kiszczak were retired.

The question of defense of the workers state is intimately connected with the assessment of Martial Law and Solidarność. Declaring their support for Martial Law, the Spartacists display a total incomprehension of the problem. The only correct view of this question from a Trotskyist vantage point is as follows: 1) Solidarność—a mass workers movement—had a unique chance to make an anti-bureaucratic political revolution, remaining on the basis of an unchanged mode of production and the type of social relations connected to the latter; the demands of Solidarność, before this movement was smashed by the bureaucracy, were not

pro-capitalist demands, but democratic ones, approximating the Trotskyist demand for workers democracy; 2) Martial Law was a bureaucratic coup against the mass workers movement, for the purpose of smashing it and weakening the working class politically; thanks to the imposition of Martial Law, i.e., thanks to the destruction of the workers movement from below, the bureaucracy could perform certain small pro-capitalist reforms, opening the flood-gates for the social counterrevolution which was soon to follow; pro-market reforms couldn't be introduced by the bureaucracy in conditions where there existed a strong workers movement, because it was clear in the negotiations with the authorities that Solidarność occupied leftist positions, while the bureaucracy occupied rightist (pro-capitalist) positions. Martial Law thus did not mean defense of the workers state, but defense of the threatened position occupied by the bureaucracy in that state, defense of the bureaucracy's secure bargaining position in its underhanded dealings with imperialism (analogous to the attacks on the workers class carried out by the Chinese bureaucracy, forcing through counterrevolutionary, pro-capitalist reforms against the will of the workers). Martial Law turned out to be the eve of social counterrevolution in Poland. After pacifying the working class, reaching a common agreement between the pro-capitalist leadership of Solidarność and its neoliberal advisers and the bureaucracy, and both parties with imperialism, was only a question of time. The technical details of the counterrevolution were hammered out at Magdalenka and at the Round Table. But it should be pointed out that we do not use the word counterrevolution to mean the removal of the PUWP (Stalinist party) from power, as the Spartacists would have it, but the process of capitalist restoration initiated as a result of the agreement reached between both parties over the workers' heads, the process of replacing the proletarian mode of production, i.e., the planned economy, with the capitalist mode of production.

According to the Spartacists, Martial Law saved the Polish workers state from CIA-financed counterrevolutionary Solidarność. The difference, however, between a Trotskyist and a Spartacist is that a Trotskyist affirms that the only force that can save a workers state, i.e., stand up against counterrevolutionary attempts to destroy the proletarian mode of production, is the working class; while saving the workers state in the long term is only possible as a result of an anti-bureaucratic political revolution.

### **On the Spartacist Renegades, Part Two**

Another blatant conflict between the program of the Spartacists and that of the revolutionary Marxism expressed by Trotsky in the "Transitional Program" is linked with the Spartacists' complete failure to comprehend this basic document. So what is the real content of the "Transitional Program," and what is the real attitude of the Spartacists to this revolutionary ABC?

In the "Transitional Program" Trotsky puts forward a series of "transitional" demands around which the rev-

olutionary workers movement should be organized. These demands include, among others, the demand for a sliding scale of working hours, demands for the expropriation by the bourgeois state of specific groups of capitalists, the demand for the state to expropriate private banks and nationalize the system of credit, etc. These demands constitute a real bridge between the minimum program (defense of the workers current interests) and the revolutionary maximum program. These demands, in spite of the fact that in themselves they do not presuppose the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, already have a profoundly anti-capitalist character—starting from today's conditions and today's consciousness of the working class, they lead inevitably to one conclusion: the conquest of power by the workers. Putting forward such demands permits "overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective circumstances for revolution and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard." On the other hand, they are of tremendous mobilizing value—around these demands it is easier to organize working people. These demands, leading inevitably to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and capitalism, thanks to the fact that they derive from the current economic struggle of the workers, are neither incomprehensible to them nor abstract. The question of their reality, inasmuch as they are directed at the bourgeois state, is exclusively one of the balance of forces (while we are dealing with a balance of forces in the proletariat's favor in the conditions of capitalist crisis). As Trotsky wrote: "If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands arising inevitably from the plagues which it unleashes, let it perish." Even if, under the conditions of capitalist crisis (and under the circumstances of the emergence of a revolutionary situation) the bourgeoisie, under the pressure of the revolutionary workers movement, meets these demands, this still won't help them. Above all, this is because the profoundly anti-capitalist character of these demands is not compatible with the further maintenance of private property. Furthermore, if the workers were capable of forcing the bourgeoisie to realize the transitional demands which negate the very nature of the capitalist mode of production, they would by the same token be able to overthrow the bourgeoisie altogether.

What a contradiction with the "Transitional Program" is Spartacist abstractionism. The Spartacists, bothering once in a while to attend union demonstrations, approach working people exclusively with slogans of the type: "For a Leninist-Trotskyist Party!" "For New October Revolutions!" or "For the Communism of Lenin, Luxemburg and Liebknecht!" The charge here does not concern the slogans themselves, which on their own are unreservedly correct, and furthermore attest to the courage of those who put them forward. The charge here concerns only the fact that they are almost the only slogans put forward by the Spartacists. In their press the Spartacists are incapable of linking the ongoing struggle of the workers with the goal declared by the entire revolutionary left. The whole problem is exactly how to show miners, fighting to keep their jobs and decent liv-

ing conditions for themselves and their families, that there exists a close connection between their particular struggle and the struggle that has long been waged between labor and capital; and that the one solution to this struggle is the revolutionary transformation of society. The only method for drawing the broad masses of the working class into open political struggle with the bourgeoisie are transitional demands. Declaring exclusively abstractionist demands, which have no connection to the real course of class struggle, one can only expose oneself to ridicule. In Poland, a struggle is currently being waged against the final phase of the restoration of capitalism led by the right-wing AWS/UW government, i.e., against Balcerowicz' Plan II and its social consequences, against the liquidation of tens of thousands of jobs in mining and steel, against the privatization of more workplaces and institutions, against the neoliberal reform of health care, education and social security, against entry into the EU and NATO, etc. This is a real struggle around which working people need to be organized, to point out to them that there are no capitalist solutions to the problems born out of capitalism, that reformist solutions are not capable of significantly changing their situation, that only the workers conquering power guarantees an ultimate escape from capitalist misery. The workers will only follow those revolutionaries who will be able to construct a bridge between today's class struggle and tomorrow's dictatorship of the proletariat. Those "revolutionaries" who can only repeat revolutionary phrases over and over will forever remain cut off from the workers movement, because they are incapable of joining the vortex of that movement's real struggle. The Spartacists' attitude to the class struggle in Poland is more or less as follows: "generally speaking we're even against privatization, overall I guess we even support strikes, but god forbid we should think such things are important; the real struggle happens completely elsewhere." So where exactly does the struggle happen, dear comrades? This question remains unanswered in the Spartacists' press. Fortunately the class struggle goes on independently of whether there's any mention of it in the Spartacists' press, while strikes and union demonstrations, which in certain situations might even count on support from the Spartacists, are a symptom of that struggle. Instead of being conscious participants in the class struggle, the Spartacists are only the all-knowing observers of it. In the struggle between labor and capital, a struggle in which Marxists stand unconditionally on the side of labor, seeking to give that struggle a political character, and attempting to transform it into an open struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Spartacists occupy a position of neutrality, occasionally giving support to the working class. It is obvious that real revolutionaries don't occupy themselves with such inessential issues as the struggle between some social classes or other.

Nobody has given a more precise and accurate characterization of the ultra-left sectarian deviation represented by the Spartacists than Trotsky himself. Doesn't

the following quotation from the "Transitional Program" fit our beloved Spartacists like a glove?

"Under the influence of the betrayals and deformations of the historical organizations of the proletariat, on the margins of the Fourth International appear or emerge various types of sectarian moods and groupings. At their foundation lies a refusal to fight for partial and transitional demands, i.e., for the elementary interests and needs of the working masses, such as they are. Preparation of revolution means for sectarians persuading themselves of the superiority of socialism. They propose turning their backs on the old trade unions, i.e., on tens of millions of organized workers, as if the masses could live outside the realities of the class struggle! They remain indifferent to the internal struggle inside the reformist organizations—as if you could win the masses without involving yourself in this struggle! (The Spartacists dub all members of reformist organizations with the title of murderers of Rosa Luxemburg and Liebknecht—Author)... Sectarians can distinguish only two colors—red and black. In order not to succumb to temptation, they simplify reality. They refuse to distinguish between the opposing camps in Spain because both camps have a bourgeois character.... They are not able to find a road to the masses, and thus gladly accuse the masses of being unable to rise to the revolutionary idea. A bridge, in the form of transitional demands, is quite unnecessary for these barren politicians, because they have no intention of crossing to the other shore. They stand in one spot, contenting themselves with constantly repeating the same abstractions. Political events are for them a cause for commentary, not action. As is the case with sectarians, and in general with all types of charlatans and miracle workers, they are always being dealt humiliation by reality and find themselves in a state of permanent irritation.... In their own circles they are usually governed by despotism. The political prostration of sectarianism complements the prostration of opportunism like a shadow not opening any revolutionary perspectives. In practical politics sectarians join at every step with opportunists, especially centrists, in struggle against Marxism. The majority of sectarian groups and cliques, living on accidental crumbs from the table of the Fourth International, live an independent organizational life, without the least chance of success. The Bolshevik-Leninists can without wasting time calmly leave such groups to their own fate.... A correct policy in relation to the trade unions is the basic condition for membership in the Fourth International. He who does not seek out and does not find a road to the mass movement is not a fighter for the party but a useless burden. The program is not for editorial boards, reading rooms or discussion clubs, but for the revolutionary action of millions. Purging the ranks of the Fourth International of sectarianism and incurable sectarians is the most important condition for revolutionary successes."

Whoever has but encountered the Spartacists will admit that they couldn't be better described. Trotsky touches here on many important questions, including the attitude of the sectarians to trade unions. Sectarians turn their backs on reactionary trade unions. The Spartacists don't support strikes organized by anti-Semitic, Catholic Solidarność. They don't even trouble themselves to explain where this anti-Semitism and religiosity comes from, what their social origin is and how to fight them (Too bad our great Bolsheviks haven't yet read Lenin's brochure on "The Attitude of the Workers Party to Religion"). At the same time, boycotting union demonstrations at which anti-Semitic slogans or reactionary accents might appear, ceding the field to the far right is exactly the best way to push unionists even further into the embrace of the anti-Semitic Wrzodaks, or

the neoliberal Jankowskis (unbelievably fantastic is the Spartacists' attitude to anti-Semitism. An NLR speaker on the crisis of capitalism was called an anti-Semite by the Spartacists for naming George Soros as a representative of speculative capital—no comment). The Spartacists also call for the weakening of reactionary trade unions and the building of new unions. Can it be that they have yet to understand the difference between a trade union and a revolutionary party? How mercilessly Trotsky ridiculed such ideas, just as Lenin utterly mocked them in "Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder," concluding that work even in the most reactionary union is the duty of every revolutionary. The sectarians' attitude to transitional demands is one of the defining marks of sectarianism. The demands formulated by Trotsky, the dialectical revolutionary process foreseen by him, is for these great revolutionaries nothing but pure reformism.

Attesting to the bastard-leftism [*lewactwo*] of the Spartacists is also their practical boycott of the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution. When the USA attacked Cuba (Bay of Pigs invasion), the Spartacists' political forebears inside the Fourth International, to whom they trace their origin, declared their neutrality in the war between "the bourgeois regime of Fidel Castro" and the bourgeois USA. This position is the unfortunate result of their failure to understand a certain theory discovered by Trotsky long ago. A basic outline of this is called for.

In backward countries which are subject to the law of combined and uneven development, bourgeois-democratic revolution, which is at the same time anti-imperialist, to the extent that it is to conquer and reach its conclusion (i.e., achieve the historical tasks set for it by history—democratic and civilizational tasks), must grow over into proletarian revolution, meaning the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement with a planned economy, breaking with imperialism, etc. Imagine the surprise of the illustrious precursors [of Spartacism] when it turned out that Castro's petty-bourgeois guerrilla army was able to overthrow capitalism in Cuba (or rather cause capitalism to be overthrown acting as the spark for the social explosion), at the same time dealing a slap in the face to imperialist America. The anti-imperialist potential of Fidel's movement, hatred for imperialism and the comprador bourgeoisie grew over in the end into an anti-capitalist revolution. Only breaking with capitalism could free the Cubans from the degrading influence of American imperialism, also permitting the achievement of genuine social advancement for broad layers of Cuban society. Fidel Castro understood this perfectly, and for this reason finally converted officially to communism. Long after the fact, having previously taken umbrage at the Fourth International for recognizing Cuba as a workers state, even the pre-Spartacists figured this out, shamefully blacking out their recent "neutrality." In parentheses, even if Fidel's regime had remained bourgeois, i.e., in a situation where the Cuban revolution had not gone beyond the framework of bourgeois society with respect to its social content, Marxists would have been obliged to

support "bourgeois" Cuba in its struggles with American imperialism. In both cases, neutrality means betrayal and capitulation to imperialism. Capitulation to imperialism is the "star attraction" of the Spartacists. Fighting imperialism for them is virtually a sure sign of nationalism, since the main enemy is at home. Applying the same logic, the Spartacists don't support strikes (or if they do support some strike or other, it's with great reservation)—after all, at any strike some nationalists might show up. The Spartacists, however, go to even worse absurdities. This is because they refuse to oppose the sellout of Polish state enterprises to foreign capital—struggle against foreign capital is, of course, nationalism of the purest order. The Spartacists haven't yet noticed that the sellout of Polish enterprises to foreign capital is not international cooperation among nations, but one of the elements of the counterrevolution (the Spartacists presumably see no connection between the restoration of capitalism in Poland and the imperialist appetites of American capital, Western European capital, etc.). We strongly advise the Spartacist comrades to go back to a very important text: *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Those who don't understand that the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are international classes, those who don't understand that the struggle between them is an international struggle, understand nothing. Fleeing from the context of international class struggle under the pretext of fighting the enemy at home is rendering service to imperialism. Nothing increases the strength of imperialism as the international atomization of the separate, national working classes does. Only the united efforts of workers of Third World countries, European and American workers can strike down the monster of American imperialism—the emperor of the international bourgeoisie.

But the greatest tragedy of the Spartacists is neither their lack of knowledge of certain classical texts of Marxism, nor their incapacity to carefully read those texts which have been passed by Spartacist censorship. Such things can always be made up for. It is the incapacity—imposed on this sect from above—for dialectical thought, which is a fundamental basis of the Marxist worldview. For the Spartacists, just as for anti-dialecticians, everything is "A" or "not-A". "A" = only the working class can build a workers state; conclusion: thus it is impossible for a bourgeois revolution to grow over into a proletarian revolution. Example two: "A" = until 1989 there was no capitalism in the Polish deformed workers state; conclusion: after 1989, i.e., after the fall of the Polish Peoples Republic, it must be capitalism at once. Example three: "A" = revolution means the introduction of workers councils; conclusion: in Cuba there were no councils, therefore there was no revolution. The examples can be multiplied.

The Spartacists boast of their unanimity. They accuse the Fourth International of not being unanimous. Meanwhile, a similar charge might be levelled against the Bolshevik Party. Anyone the least oriented on this subject could draw up a whole list of situations in which Lenin found himself with some opinion in a minority in relation to his party comrades. Even on the most key

issue, on the question of revolution, there was no unity in the Bolshevik Party. This didn't mean the necessity of a split, but the necessity of a confrontation of the opposing views at a party forum. An appropriate section on this can be found by the reader in Trotsky's brochure entitled "Lessons of October." Similarly, in the Fourth International in Trotsky's time, there was no talk of theoretical unanimity. The mortar of the Fourth International was its revolutionary program. When the party is faced with a new challenge, sometimes standing on the same ground in Marxist methodology, it is possible to arrive at opposing views. The administrative removal of a minority yields nothing. Historical practice passes its verdict on all disputes in any case. The losers, if they are Marxists, admit to their mistakes. Even Lenin himself wasn't infallible, and didn't in the least pretend to be. Both Lenin and Trotsky were able to admit mistakes with head held high. The practical criterion of truth—that is the basis of the materialist worldview. Workers democracy, democratic centralism—these, in the mouths of the Spartacists, are empty slogans. The Spartacists' body of internal legislation is completely irrelevant to its declared democratic centralism. Let me recommend some delightful reading: "Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program," available from the Spartacists for only a zloty. I especially suggest reading the sections on the internal jurisprudence with references to the Code of Hammurabi, Norman Law at the time of William the Conqueror, or even on William Shakespeare.

The above critique of the Spartacists in no way exhausts the topic. But following every calamity, betrayal and absurdity which are the lot of this pitiful sect is a waste of time. I'll leave that task to patient

hobbyists, investigators of various political and religious sects. One can't treat seriously a group which occupies itself exclusively with denunciation of other tendencies and the preparation of appropriate quotations for this purpose without the least effort to enter into the vortex of the class struggle. To sum up, the choice between the Fourth International (with all its strengths and defects, with its lack of unanimity, with its errors) and the International Communist League (Spartacist tendency) is a choice between a revolutionary organization and an ultra-leftoid sect, the choice between workers democracy and a monastic order, whose members are merely the minions of the politics of the leadership, the choice between the class struggle and abstract phrasemongering.

\* \* \*

Between writing the first and second parts of this polemic, I have learned that according to the Spartacists, the view which I presented in Part One that, according to Trotsky, we are dealing with the real dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia only from the Fall of 1918, is incorrect. I have decided to add here the quotation from the marvelous brochure by Trotsky entitled "The Class Nature of the Soviet State", which is also distributed by the Spartacists.

"Only toward the autumn of 1918 did the petty-bourgeois soldier-agrarian elemental wave recede a little to its shores, and the workers went forward with the nationalization of the means of production. Only from this time can one speak of the inception of a real dictatorship of the proletariat."—I encourage some serious reading. ■

# For New October Revolutions!

## ICL Trotskyism vs. Mandelite “Left” Polish Nationalism

Recently a polemical document against the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) has been circulated by a supporter of the Revolutionary Left Current (NLR), Polish section of the late Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat (USec) organization. Acknowledging the impact of the communist program of the ICL among youth in their milieu, the author of the piece seeks to whitewash his organization's history of bootlicking for Solidarność and a host of other counterrevolutionary forces. To this end the polemic raises as a central charge that the ICL has transformed “the demand for defense of the workers state...into a demand for the defense of the bureaucracy itself against the working class.” Opposing our determined defense of the degenerated and deformed workers states against capitalist restoration, the “anti-Stalinism” of these pseudo-Trotskyists in fact constituted a loyalty oath to the imperialists and their social democratic lackeys.

The wave of capitalist counterrevolution which destroyed the USSR and deformed workers states of Eastern Europe nearly a decade ago has been an unprecedented defeat for the working class and the oppressed not only in those countries, but around the world. Capitalist restoration has brought immiseration, massive unemployment, and the explosion of nationalist, racist and fascist violence, religious reaction and anti-Semitism. It has also led to an escalation of rivalries between the imperialist blocs dominated by the USA, Japan and Germany, whose bourgeoisies are ratcheting up the rate of exploitation, chopping social programs and smashing workers' living standards so as to increase their competitiveness, thereby pushing the world closer to imperialist war.

The demise of the degenerated and deformed workers states in the USSR and Eastern Europe is ultimately the responsibility of the Stalinist bureaucracies, which undermined those states and destroyed any semblance of revolutionary consciousness among the working class. In the Soviet Union, Poland and other countries of Eastern Europe the traditions of the revolutionary proletariat and the October Revolution had been systematically expunged from the memory of the working class and replaced by the nationalist outlook of the Stalinists, whose program of “socialism in one country” meant the betrayal of revolutionary struggles abroad as well as the undermining of the workers states themselves.

The momentous events in the former USSR and Eastern Europe provided an acid test for all groups claiming to be revolutionary. Warning of the “tragic possibility” of counterrevolution in the USSR, Trotsky had insisted that “Not the slightest taint of guilt must fall upon the revolutionary internationalists. In the hour of

mortal danger, they must remain on the last barricade” (*The Class Nature of the Soviet State*, October 1933).

The International Communist League (formerly international Spartacist tendency) has from its inception upheld the Trotskyist position for unconditional military defense of the deformed and degenerated workers states against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution, while fighting for proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracies which were leading these societies to destruction. Soviet defensism was an inseparable element of our fight for international proletarian socialist revolution. Today the deformed workers states of China, Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea are under tremendous pressure from the forces of counterrevolution. The ICL fights to win the proletariat in these countries to the urgent perspective of proletarian political revolution to stop the galloping drive towards capitalist restoration there, while struggling for socialist revolution in the capitalist world.

In contrast, swimming *with* the stream of bourgeois propaganda, the vast majority of self-styled “radical” left organizations spent the 1980s tailing pro-imperialist Social Democracy in *hailing* the forces of counterrevolutionary reaction. In the forefront of this phenomenon was Mandel's USec organization. From chanting “Solidarity with Solidarność,” to calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops fighting the CIA-backed women-hating Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan, to backing Boris Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary counterputsch in 1991, the USec supported the very forces of counterrevolution which now hold state power, imposing capitalist devastation on workers, women and the oppressed from Berlin to Warsaw to Moscow and Tashkent. As our speaker pointed out during the public debate which was held in New York between Ernest Mandel and Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee member Joseph Seymour in November 1994:

“During the period of Cold War II, Mandel and his followers never met a non-Russian anti-communist nationalist in East Europe they didn't like, they didn't support, and they didn't apologize for—of course in the name of democracy, national independence and anti-Stalinism.”

In an attempt to cover up their own support for the forces of counterrevolution, the USec must deny reality, claiming that capitalism has not been restored in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But if what exists today is some form of an “anti-capitalist planned economy,” as the USec asserts, then who in their right mind would want to be a socialist! Earlier, the USec supported the CIA and its agents against the Polish deformed workers state in the guise of “anti-Stalinism.” Now that the Stalinists have sold out the workers state and are acceptable to the imperialists as social

democratic props of the Polish *capitalist* state, USec also embraces the newly-hatched social democrats of the SdRP. Their newspaper *Dalej!* puts it blatantly: "The milieu of the social democrats can't be looked down upon. They are our closest allies in the struggle for a just Poland. A Poland without the exploitation of man by man" (*Dalej!*, No. 25, 1998).

### The Russian Question Point Blank

The Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917 once and for all took the question of workers revolution out of the realm of abstraction and gave it flesh and blood reality. The overthrow of the capitalist state, and the taking of power by the Soviets of workers and peasants deputies was a beacon for the working masses around the world who saw in the victory of the Russian working class the possibility to prevail over their own capitalist oppressors. It was likewise the object of the universal hatred of the imperialist bourgeoisie who (seconded by the pro-imperialist social democrats) since 1917 sought without pause to "strangle the infant of Bolshevism in its cradle."

The Bolshevik Party under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky understood that the preservation of the fledgling Russian workers state depended upon the international extension of their revolution, particularly to the more advanced capitalist countries. The extreme backwardness and impoverishment of the country combined with the failure of the revolution in the West and the relentless onslaught of the world's imperialist powers led to the consolidation of a bureaucratic caste in 1923-24 headed by J.V. Stalin. Repudiating the proletarian internationalism of the Bolsheviks, in 1924 the Stalinist bureaucracy led a political counterrevolution (Thermidor) under the anti-Marxist nationalist dogma of building "socialism in one country." The Stalinist bureaucracy was, as Trotsky argued, not a new class but a contradictory and fragile caste. While resting on and parasitically deriving its privileges from the proletarian property forms of the Soviet degenerated workers state, it simultaneously undermined the workers state by acting as a transmission belt for the imperialist pressures which would ultimately lead it to destruction.

Leon Trotsky formed the Left Opposition to fight to return to the Leninist program of authentic Bolshevism: the revolutionary internationalist struggle for proletarian rule essential to preserve and extend the gains of the Russian Revolution. As Trotsky wrote in his searing analysis, *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936), the gains of the Russian Revolution had been betrayed but not yet overthrown.

In contrast to the fog of contradictions offered by the Mandelite polemic, the Trotskyist program on the Russian question was very clear: *unconditional military defense* of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution, and *proletarian political revolution* to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy. Unconditional defense meant explicitly that this defense was not conditional upon the prior overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Trotsky used the term *proletarian* (note: not "anti-bureaucratic") political revolution to make

clear that what was necessary was not a new form of class rule, but a change in the political character of the regime which exercised the dictatorship of the proletariat. The bureaucratic caste had to be overthrown and genuine workers democracy restored through the rule of soviets (workers councils).

Trotsky was unambiguous about which forces must overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy—the proletariat and its revolutionary party. As he wrote in his 1937 "Not a Workers State and Not a Bourgeois State?":

"Stalin serves the bureaucracy and thus the world bourgeoisie, but he cannot serve the bureaucracy without defending that social foundation which the bureaucracy exploits in its own interests.... However, he carries through this defense with methods that prepare the general destruction of Soviet society. It is exactly because of this that the Stalinist clique must be overthrown. But it is the revolutionary proletariat that must overthrow it. The proletariat cannot subcontract this work to the imperialists."

Subcontracting this work to the imperialists and other counterrevolutionary forces is exactly what the USec did, as dramatically evidenced by its support to Polish *Solidarność*.

### NLR: Lawyers for *Solidarność* Counterrevolution

By 1980-81, decades of Stalinist betrayals had mortgaged the Polish economy to the West German banks and driven large sections of the Polish working class into the arms of *Solidarność*, an imperialist-backed clerical reactionary organization which sought to destroy the deformed workers state in Poland. The USec readily allied itself on the side of the Vatican, the CIA and Western banks. Throughout the 1980s, Mandel himself spared no effort to paint clerical anti-Semitic and anti-communist *Solidarność* in "leftist" colors. An article in the 1 March 1982 *Intercontinental Press* signed by Mandel and his co-thinkers Pierre Frank and Livio Maitan praised Walesa's supposed "political revolution" as "one of the highest forms of proletarian activity and self-organization which the world has seen since the Russian revolution." This line doesn't wash so well these days in Poland, a decade after *Solidarność* capitalist counterrevolution became an accomplished fact. So the Mandelites simply resort to telling fairy tales. As their anti-Spartacist polemic would have it:

"*Solidarność*—a mass workers movement—had a unique chance to carry out an anti-bureaucratic political revolution, remaining on the basis of an unchanged mode of production and the type of social relations connected to the latter; the demands of *Solidarność*, before this movement was smashed by the bureaucracy, were not pro-capitalist demands, but democratic ones, approximating the Trotskyist demand for workers democracy."

*Solidarność* demands "not pro-capitalist"? The program of *Solidarność*, adopted by its founding congress in September 1981, calls for "smashing" the planned economy (section III, thesis 1, point 1), liquidating the state monopoly on foreign trade (section III, thesis 1, point 3), strengthening and extending private agriculture (section III, thesis 3, point 4) and for Poland to join the world bankers' cartel, the International Monetary Fund (section III, preface).

Parading ever more openly under the crowned eagle

and cross, its leadership riddled with outright anti-Semites together with the likes of Priest Jankowski, Solidarność glorified the viciously anti-worker fascistic dictatorship of Marshal Pilsudski. Its program, peppered with quotations by Pope Karol Wojtyła, fulminates against “biological threats to the nation” and for “the protection of motherhood”—thinly veiled references to the clerical crusade to ban abortions and force women back into the home. From the start, it required willful blindness to fail to perceive the reactionary tendencies driving Solidarność, whose 21 demands from August 1980 included a call for radio broadcasting rights for the Catholic church.

Years later, the American bourgeois weekly *Time* (24 February 1992) said openly what the international Spartacist tendency had exposed years before: “Until Solidarity’s legal status was restored in 1989 it flourished underground, supplied, nurtured and advised largely by the network established under the auspices of Reagan and John Paul II.... Money for the banned union came from CIA funds, the National Endowment for Democracy, secret accounts in the Vatican and Western trade unions.” Solidarność leaders hobnobbed with anti-Communist leaders of the American “AFL-CIA” and big-time capitalists. Invited to Solidarność’s first conference in 1981 as part of the AFL-CIO delegation was one Irving Brown, identified by ex-CIA official Philip Agee as the “principal CIA agent for control of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.” And in October 1981, barely two months before Solidarność’s bid for power, Walesa was wined and dined at a hush-hush breakfast (subsequently exposed in *Le Canard Enchaîné*, 16 December 1981) with some 20 top-level American financiers and industrialists who flew in just to meet him at a posh restaurant at Paris’ Charles de Gaulle airport. As the saying goes, “Tell me who your friends are, and I’ll tell you who you are.”

As for “democracy,” as Lenin pointed out in his polemic *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, directed at an ideological forebear of Mandel: “It is natural for a liberal to speak of democracy in general; but a Marxist will never forget to ask: ‘for what class?’” As Solidarność leaders (and their USec lawyers) knew full well, by taking up calls for “democracy,” “free elections,” and “free trade unions,” they were wielding *Western imperialism’s ideological weapons of choice*, which had been used by the CIA for decades to undermine the Soviet Union, Cuba and other deformed workers states abroad and to split and smash trade unions in Europe, Africa and Latin America. As the Spartacists warned at the time, Solidarność “democracy” was nothing other than a call for “bourgeois parliamentary democracy,” i.e., the restoration of capitalism in Poland, as a stepping stone for imperialism to bring counterrevolution to the Soviet Union itself.

For all the NLR polemicist’s claims to “defense of the workers state” and the “planned economy” (now that they no longer exist) in 1981, when it counted, the USec was on the other side of the barricades!

In contrast, we Spartacists wrote in 1981 what would happen if a Solidarność-led counterrevolution should

succeed in Poland:

“Foreign capitalist investment would be invited in on a massive scale.... Wages would be kept low to compete on the world market. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions of workers would be laid off.... Certainly the mass of deluded workers in Solidarity do not want this. But the restoration of capitalism in all its ruthlessness would follow, as the night follows the day, from Solidarity’s program of ‘Western-style democracy’.”

— “Power Bid Spiked,” *Workers Vanguard*  
No. 295, 18 December 1981

We alone warned of the resurgence of virulent clericalism and nationalism, the sharp increase of women’s oppression and attacks on abortion rights that would attend a victorious capitalist counterrevolution in Poland. We called Solidarność by its right name: Company Union of CIA, Bankers, and the Vatican.

The Mandel supporter writes:

“For the Spartacists, in contrast, defense of the workers state means defense of Kiszczak and Jaruzelski, while the basic question, i.e., defense of the planned economy and its gains against the capitalist counterrevolution, doesn’t exist for the Spartacists.”

It takes real nerve for these imperialist bootlickers to accuse *us* of ignoring the defense of the planned economy! Our support for Jaruzelski’s introduction of Martial Law in December 1981 was a straightforward application of the criteria of defense of the deformed workers state set out by Trotsky repeatedly, including in the “Transitional Program”: “The possibility of entering into a bloc with the Thermidorian [Stalinist] bureaucracy for the purpose of defeating the forces of counterrevolution cannot be ruled out in advance.” For the same reason, we were prepared to back a possible Soviet intervention if this were necessary to stop Solidarność counterrevolution.

We were equally aware that Martial Law could only buy time against the immediate threat of counterrevolution. As we wrote shortly after Martial Law was declared: “Now is the time to start building educational and propagandistic cells of a Trotskyist vanguard to defend and extend the historic gains of socialized property, inherited from the October Revolution, by ousting the usurpers who undermine them and crushing those who would destroy them.” We put forward a program for the proletariat of Poland, whose key elements included a struggle against clericalism and for the strict separation of church and state; for the collectivization of agriculture; for trade unions independent of bureaucratic control and based on defense of socialized property. We called for canceling the imperialist debt and international socialist economic planning. We stood for soviet democracy, not bourgeois parliamentarism, to be realized through proletarian political revolution. As counterposed to Polish nationalism, we called for defense of the USSR against imperialism and for the revolutionary unity of Polish and Soviet workers (“What Next For Poland,” *WV* No. 298, 5 February 1981 [*Platforma Spartakusowców*, Supplement No. 7, November 1995]).

As we had noted in our article headlined “Stop Solidarity’s Counterrevolution!” (*WV* No. 289, 25 September 1981):

“What do revolutionaries do when the Marxist program stands counterposed to the overwhelming bulk of the

working class, a situation we of course urgently seek to avoid? There can be no doubt. The task of communists must be to defend at all costs the program and gains of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Today Trotskyists find themselves in such a position over Poland, and it is necessary to swim against a powerful current of counterrevolution.”

In 1989-90 the Polish Stalinists handed the Polish deformed workers state over to the imperialist-backed Solidarność counterrevolution. After claiming first that Solidarność was fighting for political revolution and occupying “leftist positions,” only a few lines later the Mandeliste writer states that “a common agreement between the pro-capitalist leadership of Solidarność...and the bureaucracy, and both with imperialism, was only a matter of time.” This retrospective discovery of Solidarność’s “pro-capitalist leadership” is at best hypocrisy, considering that Ernest Mandel was touting Jacek Kuron as a “Trotskyist,” right up to the moment Kuron became the minister of labor in the first Solidarność capitalist government in 1989. The American Mandelites of the “Fourth Internationalist Tendency” insisted that capitalist restoration in Poland was “a purely abstract possibility raised by Mazowiecki in his public pronouncements” (*BIDOM*, December 1989)! Thus the entire Mandeliste myth of “good” Solidarność of 1981 vs. “bad” Solidarność of 1989 is just that, a myth in the service of political tailism.

The fruits of the capitalist counterrevolution were no “abstraction” for the Polish working class, which was instantly struck with IMF “shock therapy” free-market immiseration and rampant clericalism. Three years after Solidarność took power, the fragile new capitalist state was threatened with a massive strike wave. At this moment, the Western imperialists shifted their bets for maintaining capitalist “stability” to the ex-Stalinist social democrats; not coincidentally, so did the Mandeliste NLR! Sidelining their support for Solidarność (which it continues to treat as a legitimate “trade union”) at this point the Mandelites launched their policy of electoral support to the SdRP-led SLD popular front under the slogan “Get the Right Out of Power!” (*Dalej!* No. 16, September 1993).

### **DDR 1989-90: Test of Political Revolution**

At bottom the Mandelites’ methodology comes down to adaptation to tailing whatever is popular at a given moment. No sharper contrast to the USec’s inveterate tailism can be found than the ICL’s fight in 1989-90 to provide *Trotskyist leadership* during the incipient political revolution in the East German deformed workers state. As mass demonstrations in East Germany raised slogans for “Socialism without privileges,” we mobilized our forces internationally with the aim of arming the working class with the Trotskyist program. We opposed the drive by the German bourgeoisie and its SPD “Trojan horse of counterrevolution” to foment capitalist restoration. We fought for proletarian political revolution in the DDR, as a bridge to socialist revolution in West Germany. We called for a red Germany of workers councils in the framework of a Socialist United States of Europe! It was this intervention that first

attracted to the ICL militants of the Young Left Movement, who later in 1990 formed the Spartacist Group of Poland.

In January 1990, after fascists had desecrated a memorial in East Berlin’s Treptow Park to the Soviet soldiers who had died in the struggle to smash Hitler’s Nazis, we issued a call to “stop the Nazis through united front action!” Fearful of our growing impact on the East German working class, the ruling Stalinist party was forced to take up the united-front call and 250,000 came out to protest at Treptow. At this demonstration, the first time in over 60 years that the Trotskyist program and banner had been raised before the proletarian masses anywhere in the Soviet bloc, our proletarian internationalist program was directly counterposed to the Stalinist plans to sell out the deformed workers state. This powerful demonstration alarmed not only the imperialists, but also the DDR Stalinists, who feared above all the possibility of proletarian political revolution. The SED renounced Treptow and made themselves the willing agents of capitalist counterrevolution.

Our comrades of the Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SpAD) were the only ones that unconditionally opposed capitalist reunification in the March 1990 East German elections. In contrast, the Mandelites were utterly impotent and split, unable to decide whom to tail next. A minority USec tendency supported by the U.S. Socialist Action group obscenely hailed capitalist reunification as an act of “self determination” of the German proletariat! Mandel was willing to support capitalist unification under certain conditions—laid out in his pamphlet “When Stalinism Crumbles” (December 1989)—that included the withdrawal of a unified Germany from NATO and the departure of all foreign troops (including Warsaw Pact forces) from Germany. Of course, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the DDR was one of the major demands of the imperialists!

### **August 1991: USec “Fighting at Yeltsin’s Side”**

The Mandeliste polemic declares, citing Trotsky’s “Transitional Program”: “‘Either the bureaucracy, becoming more and more the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers state, will overthrow the new property forms and hurl the country back into capitalism, or the working class will rout the bureaucracy and open the road to socialism.’ The workers state thus requires defense not only from imperialism, but also against the more and more pro-capitalist bureaucracy.” But compare this with the USec’s actual record during the period of capitalist counterrevolution which ended with the destruction of the USSR in 1991-92.

Responding to the renewed economic, military and political pressures of Western imperialism, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who came to power in 1985, introduced the slogans of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness). Particularly with his declaration for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, it became clear that Gorbachev’s “new thinking” represented open capitulation to Western imperialism, while powerfully encouraging the forces

of counterrevolution within the Soviet Union, including pro-capitalist elements in the Stalinist bureaucracy itself. Even as late as 1990, as Gorbachev's pro-capitalist policies were already wreaking devastation on the Soviet working class, the draft "Manifesto" for the USec world congress downplayed the threat of capitalist restoration, while politely advising Gorbachev on how to carry out his counterrevolutionary designs "democratically": "The use of money and the partial functioning of the market must therefore take place within a democratically planned economy—that is, within an overall decision-making structure that ensures that partial market mechanisms do not exacerbate social inequalities."

While Mandel was cheering for "democratic" perestroika, in 1989, Prof. Ludwik Hass, now a leading supporter of NLR, could barely contain his enthusiasm for the clique of Gorbachev's rival, Great Russian chauvinist demagogue Boris Yeltsin. Hass referred to Yeltsin (who first made a name for himself as mayor of Moscow in the mid-1980s by legalizing the Russian fascist organization Pamyat) as the "egalitarian current" of the Soviet bureaucracy, adding: "Yeltsin and his co-thinkers...are in accord with the entire Bolshevik tradition of socialist thought" (*Iglica* No. 9-10, 1989)! At the same time, seeking to curry favor from the fascist-ridden nationalist movements in the USSR's Baltic republics, the USec journal *International Viewpoint* (IV, September 18, 1989) printed an article ("The Armed Struggle Against Stalinism in Estonia") hailing Estonia's *Nazi collaborators*, the "Forest Brothers" during WW II! We immediately printed a denunciation of this outrage: see "Centrists Swing Wildly over Baltics, Poland—The Men on the Flying Trapeze," *WV* No. 486, 29 September 1989.

In August 1991, the openly counterrevolutionary forces around Boris Yeltsin used the botched coup attempt by the GKChP "Emergency Committee" (who stood for a slower-paced restoration of capitalism under bureaucratic control), to seize power with the direct backing of Western imperialism, led by then-U.S. president George Bush. ICL supporters in Moscow urgently attempted to spark working class resistance to Yeltsin's counter coup, distributing before Moscow factory gates tens of thousands of copies of our Russian-language appeal "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin/Bush Counterrevolution!"

The USec, in contrast, (*Inprecor*, 29 August 1991) explicitly stated: "It was necessary to unhesitatingly oppose the coup and, on these grounds, fight at Yeltsin's side." *NLR/Dalej!* (No. 5, 1991), for its part, cheered that: "[Genuine socialists] greet with delight the collapse of Stalinism in the USSR" and "in August a people's democratic revolution began in the USSR."

### **Mandelites "Disappear" Capitalist Counterrevolution**

When it became clear that the forces of capitalist restoration had succeeded in destroying the Soviet workers state, we told the bitter truth: "The period of open counterrevolution ushered in by Boris Yeltsin's

pro-imperialist counter coup in August 1991 has, in the absence of mass working-class resistance, culminated in the creation of a bourgeois state, however fragile and reversible." ("How the Soviet Workers State was Strangled," *WV* No. 564, 27 November 1992 [*PS* supplement No. 2, January 1993]) In Poland, there was a capitalist counterrevolution in 1989-90. The Stalinist regime gave state power over to Solidarność, while Jaruzelski remained head of state only as a figurehead. The military wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy totally capitulated in the face of the capitalist restorationist forces and became within a very short period the guardian of the new social order. From this moment the workers state in the Leninist meaning of the term ceased to exist.

Since Yeltsin, Walesa and their ilk consolidated capitalist state power, the proletariat throughout the republics of the former Soviet Union and the now-capitalist states of Eastern Europe have learned bitter lessons about the meaning of "democracy," which was, as the ICL warned, nothing other than a code word for capitalist counterrevolution, with devastating poverty, mass unemployment, homelessness for the toiling masses, together with the unrestrained rise of woman-hating clericalism, racism, nationalist fratricide and fascism.

One hardly needs to be a Marxist to recognize that something fundamental has changed in the former USSR and Eastern Europe. Indeed, when challenged by our speaker during the 1994 New York debate on the USec's position of denying that capitalist counterrevolution has occurred there, Mandel himself didn't even try to defend it. But USec still officially clings to the position that Poland is an "anti-capitalist planned economy," while simultaneously asserting that this "planned economy" has coexisted with a bourgeois state since 1989! Thus they write:

"The bourgeois state, of which we may speak in Poland since 1989, is a bourgeois state to the degree that it conducts the counterrevolutionary policy of destroying the anti-capitalist planned economy in the interest of the reborn bourgeoisie, under the diktat of world imperialism, for the purpose of establishing the capitalist mode of production."

For USec the class character of the state (whether the proletariat or the bourgeoisie exercises its dictatorship) is entirely secondary:

"Whether or not we are dealing with capitalism is not decided by the fact that one nomenclature is replaced by another (the bureaucracy of a comprador bourgeois state has replaced the bureaucracy of a workers state), but by concrete, social-economic processes."

The NLR revises the Marxist definition of the state by divorcing it from the property forms it defends. For Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky the state was an organ of class rule. The bourgeois state consists of "special bodies of armed men"—committed to the defense of capitalist private property. Likewise, the overthrow of capitalist property relations requires the smashing of the capitalist state and its replacement by "a 'special coercive force' for the suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat (the dictatorship of the proletariat)" (Lenin, *State and Revolution*).

The Mandelites claim that a capitalist state exists in conjunction with some kind of “anti-capitalist planned economy” is in fact simply a version of what the social-democratic ideologue Karl Kautsky argued. Denying the need to overthrow the capitalist state, the social democrats spread the illusion that “socialism” can be introduced by gradually nationalizing more and more enterprises within the framework of the capitalist state. This kind of revisionism has a long history among pseudo-Trotskyists; the British “Militant Tendency,” for example, perpetually called on the Labour Party to form a “workers government” via nationalizations.

Indeed, at bottom, the Mandelites’ argument that capitalism has not been restored boils down to the fact that nationalized property still exists. To be sure, Marxists are not indifferent to the destruction of industry. Thus today in capitalist Poland we Trotskyists seek to fight all attacks on the proletariat, including privatizations and union-busting which these invariably entail. But only through the prism of Social Democracy, which claims that the bourgeois state is “class-neutral” and promises a gradual, parliamentary road to socialism, is the question of nationalized industry per se primary. What is fundamental to Leninists is *which class rules*, i.e., which class exercises its dictatorship. (For a detailed discussion of the Mandelites and nationalization see: “Camp Followers of Counterrevolution! USec Labourite Nationalization Fetish,” WV No. 573, 9 April 1993 and *Platforma Spartakusowców* No. 4, Summer-Fall 1993.)

As Trotsky pointed out in “Not a Workers State and Not a Bourgeois State?” (November 1937), were the proletarian state to be overthrown in the Soviet Union, nationalized property would still continue to exist for a prolonged period of time:

“Should a bourgeois counterrevolution succeed in the USSR, the new government for a lengthy period would have to base itself upon the nationalized economy. But what does such a type of temporary conflict between the economy and the state mean? It means a *revolution* or a *counterrevolution*. The victory of one class over another signifies that it will reconstruct the economy in the interests of the victors.”

As a result of Solidarność counterrevolution, the new capitalist class which has wielded state power since 1989-1990 in Poland is reconstructing the economy in its interest—with the complete backing of its agents in the workers movement: the SdRP, PPS and the OPZZ bureaucracy.

### **Mandelites Repudiate October 1917...**

Applying this same bogus “theory,” the Mandelites deny even that the workers’ armed seizure of power in October 1917 smashed capitalism, thereby denying in practice the dictatorship of the proletariat itself. To this end, the polemicist quotes totally out of context a passage from Trotsky:

“Only toward the autumn of 1918 did the petty-bourgeois soldier-agrarian elemental wave recede a little to its shores, and the workers went forward with the nationalization of the means of production. Only from this time can one speak of the inception of a real dictatorship of the proletariat.”

If one reads this material in context, it is clear that

Trotsky was not denying that the dictatorship of the proletariat came into being in October 1917. In fact, as is clear from the full passage, he was ridiculing those who sought to deny the existence of the dictatorship of the proletariat because it did not conform to the “ideals” of such “Kantian sociologists”:

“Not only up to the Brest-Litovsk peace but even up to autumn of 1918, the social content of the revolution was restricted to a petty-bourgeois agrarian overturn and workers’ control over production. This means that the revolution in its actions had not yet passed the boundaries of bourgeois society. During this first period, soldiers’ soviets ruled side by side with workers’ soviets, and often elbowed them aside. Only toward the autumn of 1918 did the petty-bourgeois soldier-agrarian elemental wave recede a little to its shores, and the workers went forward with the nationalization of the means of production. Only from this time can one speak of the inception of a real dictatorship of the proletariat. But even here it is necessary to make certain large reservations. During those initial years, the dictatorship was geographically confined to the old Moscow principality and was compelled to wage a three-years’ war along all the radii from Moscow to the periphery. This means that up to 1921, precisely up to the NEP, that is, what went on was still the struggle to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat upon the national scale. And since, in the opinion of the pseudo-Marxist philistines, the dictatorship had disappeared with the beginning of the NEP, then it means that, in general, it had never existed.”

Thus, Trotsky concludes:

“To these gentlemen the dictatorship of the proletariat is simply an imponderable concept, an ideal norm not to be realized upon our sinful planet. Small wonder that ‘theoreticians’ of this stripe, insofar as they do not denounce altogether the very word dictatorship, strive to smear over the irreconcilable contradiction between the latter and bourgeois democracy.”

— “The Class Nature of the Soviet State” (1933)

The proletariat, spearheaded by the Red Guards, indeed seized power in Russia on 7 November 1917, yet major industry was not nationalized until late 1918. So what was the class character of the Soviet state between November 1917 and the autumn of 1918? Lenin was categorical, declaring in his October 1919 article “Economics and Politics in the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat” that 8 November 1917 was “the first day of the dictatorship of the proletariat.” The key question was *which class held state power*, whose class interests were served by the “apparatus of coercion of one class by another”? From day one of its rule, revolutionary soviet power served to suppress “the profiteer, the commercial racketeer, the disrupter of monopoly”—the forces Lenin termed “our principal ‘internal’ enemies.”

By denying that the proletarian order was established in 1917, the Mandelites trivialize the significance of the October Revolution. The NLR’s repudiation of October 1917 shows their true kinship with Karl Kautsky, who, as Lenin wrote: “Takes from Marxism that which is acceptable to liberals, to the bourgeoisie... while rejecting, or passing over in silence, or erasing from Marxism that which is *not acceptable* to the bourgeoisie (revolutionary violence of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie for the purpose of its destruction)” (*The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*). In addition, the NLR is here resurrecting the Menshevik/Stalinist theory of “two-stage revolution” which claims

that a separate bourgeois democratic revolution must precede the struggle for proletarian revolution. This is nothing but a program of class treason, leading again and again to the betrayal of revolution and the massacre of proletarian forces, as in China in 1925-27 and Indonesia in 1965.

### Trotsky's "Transitional Program" vs. NLR "Pressuring the SLD to the Left"

The Mandelite polemicist charges us with a complete failure to understand the "Transitional Program" (1938), which Trotsky wrote for the founding of the Fourth International. He charges that we "who can only repeat revolutionary phrases over and over will forever remain cut off from the workers movement..." Revolutionaries, of course, have always been branded as "sectarians" by inveterate opportunists like USec. What the Mandelites really hate about us is that we intervene in social struggle as *communists* who seek to expose all brands of class betrayal.

Trotsky fought to forge the Fourth International because of the total political bankruptcy of the social democratic, Stalinist and centrist misleadership of the working class. For all the NLR writer's pious invocations of Trotsky's "Transitional Program," he omits the fact that this document stands above all for the *political independence* of the proletariat as opposed to all forms of class collaboration, i.e., exactly what is pushed on every page of *Dalej!* In the words of the "Transitional Program" itself: "People's Fronts on the one hand—fascism on the other, these are the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution. From the historical point of view, however, both these resources are stopgaps.... Nothing short of the overthrow of the bourgeoisie can open a road out."

Declaring "uncompromising war on the bureaucracies of the Second, Third, Amsterdam and Anarcho-syndicalist internationals, and their centrist satellites," the "Transitional Program" was a program for achieving proletarian power. In the hands of the USec it is turned into its opposite, i.e. a cover for their prostration before alien class forces, support for Social Democracy, popular-frontist class collaboration and counterrevolutionary reaction.

It's no coincidence that "On the Spartacist Renegades" *never once mentions* Social Democracy, the PPS, the SdRP or the SLD (the popular-front electoral formation of the SdRP which chains its working class base to open bourgeois forces such as Urban's NIE organization). But the NLR paper puts forward their line clearly: "Let's Pressure the SLD!", "Let's Demand Leftist Policies" (*Dalej!* No. 21) and "One should vote for the SLD" (*Dalej!*, No. 24).

Any radical-minded worker or youth reading the above lines might wonder just what planet *Dalej!* is published on. The SLD popular front government, which ruled Poland for the capitalist rulers between 1993 and 1997 introduced massive attacks on the working class and the oppressed, from pushing forward privatization and slashing budgets for healthcare and education, sharply increasing anti-immigrant deportations,

to supporting the concordat and restoring vast properties and privileges to the Catholic Church.

For three years the SdRP-led SLD government enforced the vicious ban on abortions introduced by Solidarność, introducing a largely symbolic "liberalization" of this law only in its last year of office. Far from being the "lesser evil," the SLD government in fact paved the way for the clerical reactionaries of AWS, while today continuing to compete with UW as champions of "free-market liberalism," European integration and Polish NATO membership.

It takes the profoundest hypocrisy for the polemicist to hail what he ludicrously calls the "struggle against the final phase of the restoration of capitalism led by the right-wing AWS/UW government...against the liquidation of tens of thousands of jobs in mining and steel, against the privatization of more workplaces and institutions, against neoliberal reform of health care, education and social security, against entry into the EU and NATO..." while passing over in silence, thus covering for the social democrats' openly expressed support for all these attacks on the working class.

For all the rhetoric of the polemicist regarding Trotsky's "Transitional Program," the Mandelites' role is clearly not to "draw the broad masses of workers into open political struggle with the bourgeoisie" but to *defend* the pro-capitalist, pro-privatization, pro-NATO social democrats from exposure before the workers by the "sectarian, ultraleft Spartacists." In sharp contrast, we communists *fight against* privatization, sackings, anti-abortion laws, deportations and all other attacks on the working class and the oppressed in the understanding that the condition for the working class' victory will be breaking them from the SdRP, OPZZ "labor lieutenants of capital."

This is the communist program of *transitional demands* with which the Spartacist Group of Poland intervenes in union demonstrations and strikes, such as last winter's transit strike in Poznan, the nation-wide machinists strike and the current struggles in the health sector. It is our very concrete exposure of the reformist misleaders of the SdRP, PPS and OPZZ, and our refusal to subordinate the workers' struggle to the electoral interests of the SLD popular front, which earns us the title of "sectarianism" from the Mandelite opportunists.

### Down With Anti-Semitism: Tool of Reaction!

For a document issued by self-proclaimed leftists in Poland today, "On the Spartacist Renegades" is immediately striking for what it leaves out: among topics *never mentioned* in over 10 single-spaced pages are: women's oppression, the ban on abortion, resurgent fascism, anti-immigrant racism and deportations, anti-Roma terror, and clerical reaction.

Because of their loyalty to the Polish capitalist state through its "left" pillar, the SLD, the Mandelites cannot help but imbibe deeply of the Polish nationalism of the bourgeois rulers, and all the reactionary filth this entails. A few years back, as Solidarność rammed through its first anti-abortion ban, the NLR capitulators duly fell to their

knees with the slogan: "We demand full rights for women to freely choose motherhood" (*Dalej!* No. 13, 1993). As the bourgeoisie enforces "Catholic education" in the state schools, *Dalej!* runs regular articles hailing "guerrilla priests" in Latin America.

The NLR writer now raises a call for the defense of the Polish bourgeoisie worthy of Rydzyk's Radio Marija: "The Spartacists haven't yet noticed that the sellout of Polish enterprises to foreign capital is not international cooperation among nations, but one of the elements of the counterrevolution" ("On the Spartacist Renegades"). What kind of "Marxists" are so concerned that the factories are owned by Polish exploiters? It's no secret that "the defense of Polish enterprises against foreign capital" is the battle cry of the entire gamut of bourgeois nationalist reaction, and a traditional code-phrase for anti-Semites.

The Mandelites have a long history of capitulation to openly reactionary forces, including its continued promotion of anti-worker, reactionary Solidarność as a bona fide trade union (i.e., part of the workers movement). In reality, neither Solidarność (nor its split-offs like Solidarność 80 and August 80) are trade unions, but anti-communist, clerical nationalist organizations, saturated with anti-Semitism.

Not long after the fascistic Solidarność demagogue Wrzodak led frenzied mobs through the streets of Warsaw chanting "SLD to the Gas Chambers!" seeking to channel workers' anger into poisonous racism and anti-Semitism, NLR's paper *Dalej!* wrote: "People in fear of losing work are easy prey to the loud, neofascist demagoguery of Zygmunt Wrzodak. Among the thousand base slanders and stupidities Wrzodak has something very important to tell them, that their struggle to keep their jobs is right" (*Dalej!* No. 25, Spring/Summer 1998). Never once mentioning the word "anti-Semitism" in this article, the Mandelites strive to erase the class line which separates this racist bourgeois filth from the workers movement.

The writer is particularly outraged at the ICL exposing his organization's capitulation to anti-Semitism. But during a public meeting on the recent international financial crisis, the Mandelite speaker JS, never once referring to Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, instead fulminated against global institutions transcending the "democratic control of independent nations" and attacking "speculative capital" in the person of George Soros (the American financier whose Jewish background is underlined by all the forces of Polish reaction). This presentation, which would have been warmly welcomed at any gathering of reactionary Solidarność, met with a sharp protest from the SGP, which denounced the speaker for "beating the drums of anti-Semitism." It is appropriate here, for its educational value, to refer to the work *On the Jewish Question, A Marxist Approach* by Abram Leon, the young Belgian Trotskyist leader who recruited Ernest Mandel to Trotskyism before himself perishing in the hands of the Hitlerites at Auschwitz in 1944:

"[The petty bourgeoisie] wants to be anti-capitalist without ceasing to be capitalist. It wants to destroy the 'bad' character of capitalism, that is to say, the tendencies

which are ruining it, while preserving the 'good' character.... But since there does not exist a capitalism which has the 'good' tendencies without also possessing the 'bad,' the petty bourgeoisie is forced to dream it up. It is no accident that the petty bourgeoisie has invented 'super-capitalism,' the 'bad' deviation of capitalism, its evil spirit. It is no accident that its theoreticians have struggled mightily for over a century (Proudhon) against 'bad speculative capitalism' and defended 'useful productive capitalism.' The attempt of Nazi theoreticians to distinguish between 'national productive capital' and 'Jewish parasitic capital' is probably the last attempt of this kind."

(For a fuller account of Abram Leon and the history of class struggle against anti-Semitism, see *Spartacist* No. 49-50: "Revolution, Counterrevolution and the Jewish Question" [*PS SGP Bulletin*, No. 2, Fall 1997].)

The Mandelites' capitulation to backwardness in the name of loyalty to the Polish bourgeois rulers couldn't be in sharper contradiction to the "Transitional Program," which states:

"The implacable exposure of racial prejudices and all forms and every shading of the nationalist boot and chauvinism, particularly anti-Semitism, must become part of the work of every section of the Fourth International, as the highest educational work in the struggle against imperialism and war. Our main slogan remains —proletarians of all countries, unite!"

While the Mandelites boast of selling their papers at anti-Semitic and fascist rallies led by the likes of Wrzodak (in the name of not "conceding the field to the extreme right"), we Communists, following Trotsky's "Transitional Program," call for workers defense guards to sweep these vermin off the streets! Down with anti-Semitism, tool of reaction! Stop racist deportations! For worker/minority mobilizations to stop the fascists!

### **Defend Cuba! For Proletarian Political Revolution!**

On the question of Cuba the Mandelite polemic lies outright about our tendency's position:

"When the USA attacked Cuba (Bay of Pigs Invasion), the Spartacists' political forebears inside the Fourth International, to whom they trace their origin, declared their neutrality in the war between 'the bourgeois regime of Fidel Castro' and the bourgeois USA."

In 1961, the year of the Bay of Pigs Invasion, our predecessors, the Revolutionary Tendency in the American Socialist Workers Party submitted a resolution which states that the duty of revolutionaries is:

"(a) To exert the utmost effort to defend the Cuban Revolution not only against the military and other attacks of US imperialism, but also against the political attacks of the social-democratic agents of imperialism.

"(b) To struggle for the development and extension of the Cuban revolution and against the attempts of counter-revolutionary Stalinism to corrupt it from within."

The Revolutionary Tendency had its origin in the struggle against the SWP's grotesque prostration over Castroism, which represented a liquidation of the necessity for a Trotskyist proletarian revolutionary party. Beginning in the early '60s, under the impact of the victories of Castro's guerrilla army in Cuba and the Algerian war of independence, a new generation of young radicals impressionistically viewed the peasant guerrilla road to power as a shortcut to social revolution and national liberation in what today is called the Third World. The American SWP proclaimed Castro an "unconscious Trotskyist" and the Cuban Revolution as

equivalent to the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917—a healthy workers state with a few “deformations.”

The common enthusiasm for Castro on the part of the SWP and Mandel’s International Secretariat laid the basis for their fusion to form the United Secretariat (USec). In this period, the Mandelites were acting as cheerleaders for Stalinist forces like Castro and Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam. Indeed, in the 1960s the Mandelites were attacking our principled Trotskyist position as “Stalinophobia.” Two decades later, at the height of Cold War II, when they were marching in the ranks of anti-Soviet Social Democracy, they were denouncing the same position as “Stalinophilia!”

Scrapping the Trotskyist fight for proletarian leadership, the NLR polemic gives a good example of their tendency’s method of tailing alien class forces:

“Castro’s petty-bourgeois nationalist guerrilla army was able to overthrow capitalism in Cuba (or rather cause capitalism to be overthrown acting as the spark igniting a social explosion), at the same time dealing a slap in the face to imperialist America. The anti-imperialist potential of Fidel’s movement, hatred for imperialism and the comprador bourgeoisie grew over in the end into an anti-capitalist revolution.... Fidel Castro understood this perfectly, and for this reason finally converted officially to communism.”

Dispensing with even the pretense of Marxist class analysis the Mandelites’ description of the Cuban Revolution is a mirror reflection of the Castroite bureaucracy’s own populist rhetoric, complete with deification of the great leader, eliminating any independent role for the proletariat. (Also significantly omitted by the NLR polemic on this question is the former Soviet Union, whose existence guaranteed Cuba’s economic and military security against U.S. imperialism for 30 years!)

In contrast to the Mandelites’ tailing of Castro the Revolutionary Tendency understood that the Cuban Revolution had created a deformed workers state fundamentally similar to those in Eastern Europe and China. In the Spartacist Statement to the 1966 Conference of the International Committee (IC), headed by the British Socialist Labour League leader Gerry Healy, we wrote:

“Two decisive elements have been common to the whole series of upheavals under Stalinist-type leaderships, as in Yugoslavia, China, Cuba, Vietnam: 1) *a civil war of the peasant-guerrilla variety*, which first wrenches the peasant movement from the immediate control of imperialism and substitutes a petty-bourgeois leadership; and then, if victorious, seizes the urban centers and on its own momentum smashes capitalist property relations, nationalizing industry under the newly consolidating Bonapartist leadership: 2) *the absence of the working class* as a contender for social power, in particular, the absence of its revolutionary vanguard: this permits an exceptionally independent role for the petty-bourgeois sections of society which are thus denied the polarization which occurred in the October Revolution, in which the most militant petty-bourgeois sections were drawn into the wake of the revolutionary working class.

“The petty-bourgeois peasantry under the most *favorable* historic circumstances conceivable could achieve no third road, neither capitalist nor working class. Instead all that has come out of China and Cuba was a state of the same order as that issuing out of the political degeneration of the political counterrevolution of Stalin in the Soviet Union, the degeneration of the October Revolution. That is why we are led to define such states as *deformed workers states*. And the experience since the Second World War, properly understood, offers not a

basis for revisionist turning away from the perspective and necessity of revolutionary working-class power, but rather it is a great vindication of Marxian theory and conclusions under new and not previously expected circumstances.”

Our position on the Cuban Revolution also was distinct from the “inverted Pabloism” of Healy’s International Committee (IC), which responded to USec’s revisionism by simply putting a plus where the USec put a minus. To Healy’s insistence that Cuba remained a “capitalist state” albeit with a “weak bourgeoisie,” we pointed out: “If the Cuban bourgeoisie is ‘weak,’ as the IC affirms, it must be tired from its long swim to Miami, Florida.”

Since the origins of our tendency, the ICL has been consistent in its application of the Trotskyist approach to the deformed and degenerated workers states, i.e., “the Russian Question.” As was the case with the DDR, Poland and the USSR, etc., as communists we defend the Cuban deformed workers state unconditionally against imperialist attack and internal forces of capitalist counterrevolution while calling for proletarian political revolution to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Today, even more isolated as a result of the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (which the USec supported), the Cuban deformed workers state is in deadly danger. This threat arises not only from the economic blockade and open military threats of U.S. imperialism, but also from the forces of internal counterrevolution, including key sections of the Castroite bureaucracy, which has opened the country up to large-scale economic penetration, particularly from the dominant imperialist powers of the European Union. Question: what do the Mandelites have to offer Cuban workers in place of the Trotskyist program of proletarian political revolution? Answer: printing an endorsement, *written by two Catholic priests (!)*, of Castro’s “alliance” with Karol Wojtyla, pope of counterrevolution (see: “The Pope in Cuba,” *Dalej!* No. 25, 1998)!

The ICL fights for building a Cuban section of the reformed Fourth International to lead the proletariat as the only possible guarantor of defense of the Cuban Revolution, and struggles at the same time to build a Leninist vanguard party for the overthrow of U.S. imperialism “in the belly of the beast.”

## Pabloite Liquidationism

The NLR/USec’s denial of the need for a Leninist vanguard party is what leads it to repetitively tail after alien class forces. These forces have ranged from Cuban Stalinists to pro-imperialist social democrats to outright counterrevolutionaries like Polish Solidarność and Boris Yeltsin. This represents not isolated “errors” by Mandel and his followers, but the *end product* of that current’s decisive break from Trotskyism which occurred decades before.

In 1953 Trotsky’s Fourth International was politically destroyed by Pabloism, a revisionist doctrine which took root in a section of the Fourth International’s leadership. The latter had been decimated during the war, and its main leaders, including Trotsky, murdered. Following WW II, Stalinist forces with the backing of the

Red Army succeeded in carrying out social revolutions “from above” in Eastern Europe, abolishing capitalism in the wake of smashing Hitler’s Third Reich. In Yugoslavia, China and later Cuba, similar overturns were achieved by peasant-based Partisan armies.

Pablo and his lieutenant Mandel answered these theoretical challenges with an anti-Trotskyist *program* characterized above all by the rejection of the need for proletarian revolutionary leadership and adaptation to existing Stalinist, social-democratic and petty-bourgeois nationalist leaderships. Projecting the imminent outbreak of a new world war, in which the Sino-Soviet states would emerge victorious over capitalist imperialism, Pablo anticipated that the Stalinist leaderships would be “forced” by objective pressures to play a revolutionary role in this struggle. Trotskyist parties could thus do nothing other than enter the reformist parties in hopes of pushing them to the left.

Our tendency stands in solidarity with the struggle of James P. Cannon and others, who albeit in a limited and belated way, sought to defend the Trotskyist program and party against Pabloite revisionism, splitting with Pablo’s outfit in 1953.

During the 1950s and ’60s Pablo and his successor Mandel became virtual press agents for a host of Stalinist and petty-bourgeois leaderships ranging from Tito, Mao, Algeria’s Ben Bella to Fidel Castro and Ho Chi Minh. In the USSR and Eastern Europe, the Pabloites called for “the self-reform” of the bureaucracy, for example politically supporting “liberal” Stalinist bureaucrats like Gomulka during the 1956 Poznan uprising. Far from fighting for proletarian political revolution *against* Stalinism, they saluted “the leadership role played by the Gomulka tendency...a centrist tendency nonetheless moving to the left.” (*Quatrième Internationale*, December 1956).

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the USec was discovering “new mass vanguards” in the form of bourgeois feminism, environmentalism, and even student power and “red universities.” In each case, the dynamic of the given movement was embraced by the Mandelites as “objectively anti-capitalist,” independent of its openly stated program or leadership. As our comrade Joseph Seymour pointed out during the 1994 debate: “The United Secretariat has always been and only aspires to be a pressure group on various reformist, petty-bourgeois radical and bourgeois nationalist currents. In fact, over the decades Mandel tried literally *everything except* building a proletarian vanguard party.”

As the spectrum of bourgeois politics moved sharply to the right after the defeat of U.S. imperialism in Vietnam in 1975, the USec’s field of candidates for “revolutionary leadership” began to include outright reactionaries. For example, even as Khomeini’s Islamic guards in Iran were hunting down and executing leftists, including Mandel’s own followers, the USec was still praising the “revolutionary anti-imperialism” of the Ayatollah in the pages of its press.

By the end of the 1970s, the USec was deeply liquidated in the milieu of deeply anti-Soviet West European Social Democracy, led by Mitterrand’s popular-

front government in France. The slogan “Solidarity with Solidarność” was the glue which cemented the Mandelites’ unity with the capitalist order, reaching via Social Democracy to Reagan, Thatcher and the Pope.

### For a Leninist Vanguard Party!

Corresponding to the Mandelites’ perpetual pursuit of alien class forces is their organizational Menshevism. They sneer at our democratic centralist principles, accusing us of being nonthinking automatons, while falsely presenting Lenin as if he were some garden variety opportunist and unity mongerer:

“The Spartacists boast of their unanimity. They accuse the Fourth International of not being unanimous. Meanwhile, a similar charge might be levelled against the Bolshevik Party. Anyone the least oriented on this subject could draw up a whole list of situations in which Lenin found himself with some opinion in a minority in relation to his party comrades. Even on the most key issue, on the question of revolution, there was no unity in the Bolshevik Party. This didn’t mean the necessity of a split, but the necessity of a confrontation of the opposing views at a party forum. An appropriate section on this can be found by the reader in Trotsky’s brochure ‘Lessons of October.’”

In “Lessons of October” Trotsky describes how in the Bolshevik Party of 1917, there were two tendencies of utmost principled significance: “The first and principal tendency was proletarian and led to the road of world revolution. The other was ‘democratic,’ i.e., petty bourgeois and led, in the last analysis, to the subordination of proletarian policies to the requirements of bourgeois society in the process of reform. These two tendencies came into hostile conflict over every essential question that arose throughout the year 1917.” Lenin intransigently fought against those Bolshevik leaders like Kamenev and Zinoviev who opposed the struggle for proletarian power. Fearing that the central committee was balking at organizing the insurrection, Lenin announced his willingness to split from it (which would have been tantamount to splitting the party). In “The Crisis has Matured” (September 29, 1917) Lenin wrote:

“I am compelled to *tender my resignation from the Central Committee*, which I hereby do, reserving for myself freedom to campaign among the *rank and file* of the Party and at the Party Congress.

“For it is my profound conviction that if we ‘wait’ for the Congress of Soviets and let the present moment pass, we shall *ruin* the revolution.”

Lenin’s views on the party question developed over a period of time, but he never shrank from splits when necessary to defend the programmatic integrity of the Bolsheviks. Lenin and the Bolsheviks waged a series of hard political fights for the Marxist program, splitting first with the Economists, then with the Mensheviks, the Bund, then with the Otzovists and the Boycotters. (See *Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*.) Lenin recognized that fusions, as well as splits, are both valid methods of building the revolutionary party, as long as they take place on a principled political basis. In 1917 the Bolsheviks fused with Trotsky’s Inter-District Organization, providing a valuable increment of cadre. Many of the cadre in our own organization were won from other groups, including the USec, through such fusions.

Only through relentless political struggle, both internally and externally, can the programmatic integrity of the party be defended. For communists, internal debate is an essential means of arriving at political clarity and educating revolutionary cadres. When the Mandelites denounce the ICL for “unanimity” they mean our practice of Leninist democratic centralism. When we arrive at a political line through internal discussion and debate, it is the obligation of all members to defend it in public. The press carries *one* political line. The right to form factions, vital to a living communist movement, is part of our organizational rules and our “Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program.” These are published and made available in *Platforma Spartakusowców* No. 7 (special edition), Spring 1998. We uphold the principle of workers democracy, defending the right of all political tendencies within the workers movement to present their point of view as an essential condition for the proletariat to reach political clarity as to its tasks.

All of this is alien to the USec, whose Menshevik amorphousness is derived by aping its big brothers in the Social Democracy. Lenin rejected the Kautskyan “party of the whole class,” through which the vanguard of the proletariat is necessarily submerged in a sea of political backwardness. The USec welcomes everyone as members—as long as they are not revolutionaries. As many of our cadres know from personal experience, “democracy” is the permanent right of the opportunists to publicly say whatever they wish, while “discipline” is applied only against would-be leftist minorities. When decisive social struggles are raging, the USec has been a seething mass of warring cliques and sections pursuing counterposed lines. Thus, in Portugal in 1975, while CIA-financed Socialist Party-led mobs trashed CP headquarters and battled the Stalinists in the streets, some USec national sections were egging the SP on, while other sections politically tailed the CP.

The purpose of Leninist organizational methods is simple: As James P. Cannon wrote during the struggle

with Pablo’s supporters in the American SWP in 1953: “Democratic centralism has no special virtue per se. It is the specific principle of a combat party, united by a single program, which aims to lead a revolution. Social democrats have no need of such a system of organization for the simple reason that they have no intention of organizing a revolution. Their democracy and centralism are not united by a hyphen, but kept in separate compartments for separate purposes. The democracy is for the social patriots and the centralism is for the revolutionists.”

—“Letter to Duncan Conway,” *Speeches to the Party* (April 1953)

The social-democratic or Menshevik type of organization is, however, perfectly appropriate to the politics of the USec and its Polish group. Capitulation to alien class forces in your own country is possible only if international ties have the character of a “lash-up,” where the various national bloc partners agree to confine their opinions to their own “national turf,” and in particular agree not to interfere with the work of the other parties. In contradistinction, the very need for an international vanguard party is premised on the understanding that such a party is necessary in order to counter particular national pressures, recognizing that all opportunism is nationalist.

As Trotsky once noted, those who are incapable of defending conquests already gained can never fight for new ones. The history of abdication by the Mandelite USec/NLR of the Trotskyist obligation of Soviet defensism, and its active support for the forces of counterrevolution, translates into accommodation to the bourgeoisie and the capitalist state, including in Poland today. In contrast, we of the Spartacist Group of Poland, Polish sympathizing section of the International Communist League, stand with American Trotskyist James P. Cannon in proclaiming: We are the party of the Russian Revolution. The ICL fights to build Leninist-Trotskyist parties, which are essential to bringing revolutionary consciousness to the proletariat, to rearm it and lead it to its historic task—the fight for new October Revolutions!

—14 March 1999

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