



“Only Trotskyism Can Defend the Gains of October”

A debate between the External Tendency of the international Spartacist tendency and the leadership of the Spartacist League/US on Soviet defensism and the nature of the Kremlin bureaucracy.



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Preface

The material in this pamphlet is chiefly comprised of polemics between the External Tendency of the international Spartacist tendency (ET -- a grouping of former members of the iSt) and the leadership of the Spartacist League/U.S. (SL). It begins with a letter from the ET to the SL criticizing the decision to designate a busload of SL supporters attending an anti-fascist rally as the "Yuri Andropov Brigade." SL leader James Robertson's reply to this letter, as well as our rejoinder and a subsequent exchange with one of the SL's scribes, Reuben Samuels, complete this correspondence.

Workers Vanguard (WV) initially stated that the designation "Yuri Andropov Brigade" was "somewhat facetious." However, in the course of the correspondence the argumentation advanced in defense of this "factional jibe" revealed an appetite to forego the long and difficult struggle to forge an independent Trotskyist vanguard in favour of identification with the "next best thing." Historically this type of liquidationist impulse is known in the Trotskyist movement as "Pabloism" after the chief architect of the destruction of the Fourth International in the early 1950s. In this case, the "next best thing" happened to be Yuri Andropov -- a man who played a key role in the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 (see article by Bill Lomax).

It is at least a minor irony that the heroic uprising of the Hungarian workers in 1956 against their Stalinist overlords (including Yuri Andropov) provided an important impetus in the consolidation of the left-wing opposition within Max Shachtman's Independent Socialist League (ISL). This grouping, which included James Robertson, went on to fuse with the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The leaders of the ex-ISL grouping soon found themselves in another factional struggle with the rightward-moving leadership of the SWP. The Revolutionary Tendency (the progenitor of the SL) was forged centrally over the struggle against the SWP leadership's Pabloite orientation toward a far more charismatic and subjectively revolutionary Stalinist than Yuri Andropov -- Fidel Castro. (See "Cuba and Marxist Theory," Marxist Bulletin No. 8, published by the Spartacist League.)

The SL has yet to generalize its adulation of Yuri Andropov into full-blown Pabloism but the statement in Samuels' letter that it is "obscene" to compare Andropov with Stalin certainly provides the ideological basis for doing so. It also raises a question which SL theoreticians are unable to answer: i.e., if Andropov was really such a big improvement over Brezhnev then why did Chernenko, Brezhnev's favourite and reportedly Andropov's chief rival, succeed him? Nor can they explain why none of these leadership changes have produced any significant shifts in direction by the Kremlin.

In addition to the materials dealing with the "Yuri Andropov Brigade," we also reprint three other items, all of which relate to the iSt's recent treatment of the Russian question. The first is a short article reprinted from the ET Bulletin on the cynical, Stalinophilic motions used to purge the iSt's German section in September 1981.

The second is a letter from the ET criticizing the SL's rather bizarre "emergency" demonstrations against the fourth annual (1983) seating of the Pol Pot delegation at the United Nations. We noted that at these demonstrations for the first time the iSt deliberately dropped the call for political revolution within the deformed and degenerated workers states. As we point out in the letter, this anti-Trotskyist programmatic adaptation is typical of Pabloite organizations which seek to curry favour with Stalinist bureaucrats.

The final item reprinted in this pamphlet is an article from the Bulletin of the External Tendency commenting on the SL's flinch from Soviet defensism in its initial response on the downing of the South Korean KAL 007. In its 9 September 1983 issue, WV stated that the downing of the airliner would have been "worse than an atrocity" regardless of the "potential military damage" had the Soviets known that it was a passenger flight.

It may seem somewhat anomalous that an organization which makes so much of its commitment to Soviet defensism and attempts to identify itself more closely with the Kremlin oligarchy, both explicitly and through deliberate programmatic omission, should capitulate so quickly and in such a cowardly fashion under the pressure of an outburst of domestic anti-Sovietism. In the long run these two impulses cannot be reconciled. But an organization with a long revolutionary history from which it is breaking is an inherently unstable and contradictory phenomenon. The centrist SWP of 1963 in completing its break with its revolutionary past, took time out from acting as volunteer publicists for the Fidelistas to send a craven message of condolence to the widow Kennedy when U.S. imperialism's commander-in-chief, who was personally responsible for the Bay of Pigs, was assassinated.

Perhaps a more apt analogy is Gerry Healy's Socialist Labour League circa 1967 which signified its definitive departure from a decade of orthodox Trotskyism by simultaneously adapting to the Arab bourgeoisies (under the guise of the "Arab Revolution") and Mao Tse Tung's wing of the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy. Healy is the best known modern practitioner of "political banditry" -- an eclectic and politically unpredictable form of centrism -- which, with an admixture of cultism, characterizes the Spartacist tendency today.

The two letters from the Spartacist League leadership which we reprint are politically evasive and contain several deliberate misrepresentations. Yet they are among the most political responses we ever received from them on any question. Most of the other "polemics" directed at us by the SL have consisted chiefly of anti-political abuse. While vociferously decrying the existence of a "Big-Lie" conspiracy against itself (which in the paranoid imagination of the Spartacist leadership supposedly links much of the left to the major police agencies of the American bourgeoisie), the SL/US thinks nothing of slandering its political opponents as "scabs," "racists," and even "proto-fascists" and "Nazi-lovers."

In his January 3 1983 reply to us, cde. Samuels talked about the "richly democratic internal life" of the iSt. But the reality is something quite different. For over sixteen years there have been no factions and no tendencies in the SL. Those with any substantial experience in ostensibly Leninist politics will know what that fact signifies. It was certainly not the case in Lenin's Bolshevik Party nor in Trotsky's Left Opposition, nor in the revolutionary Socialist Workers Party of James P. Cannon. Indeed, even Gerry Healy's degenerate caricature of "hard" Trotskyism

which has long since spun itself out of the workers movement, has probably had more formal internal factional life in the last decade than the SL/US.

What has taken the place of open political struggle in the iSt is a series of bizarre purges and frenzied witchhunts. These are intended, on the one hand to shake up and intimidate the membership and on the other, to rid the leadership of any potential critics. The charges used as the pretexts in most of these cases were manufactured for one purpose only -- to do the job. Whether or not they contained a kernel of truth was literally a matter of indifference.

Such internal practices must eventually manifest themselves in the formal program and external activity of any organization. The profoundly anti-Leninist and even anti-political techniques which the SL leadership has embraced have a political logic. The SL itself recognized this in its statement on the Healy regime in 1966:

"the Healy-Banda machine subordinates real political issues of agreement and disagreement to the exigencies of organizational issues and personal prestige politics. That organizational tendency is itself a political issue of the first order."

What unites the KAL flinch with the "Yuri Andropov Brigade" is an underlying pessimism about the historic possibilities of building a viable revolutionary tendency. The KAL 007 flinch is just the flip-side of the Andropov sychophancy -- both are symptomatic of the political degeneration of the international Spartacist tendency from Trotskyist orthodoxy to political banditry.

-- November 1984

'You Can't Defend the Soviet Union With Yuri Andropovs'

December 13, 1982

Dear Comrades of the Spartacist League:

Congratulations on your victory on November 27th. Enclosed is a cheque for twenty-five dollars to help offset the cost for this successful labor/black mobilization that stopped the Klan. We sincerely hope the follow-up wins many new recruits to Trotskyism.

We are, however, somewhat disturbed that you chose to name your New York contingent the "Yuri Andropov Battalion." Trotsky broke finally and definitively with the thoroughly bureaucratized and reformist Comintern over the cowardice, baseness and perfidity of the Yuri Andropovs of 1933 which permitted the fascists to take power in Germany without firing a shot. We are sure that you agree that the Soviet bureaucrats of 1982 are no more revolutionary, nor any better equipped politically to wage an effective struggle against fascism, than were their ancestors of half a century ago. The "Yuri Andropov Battalion" strikes us therefore as a singularly inappropriate designation for a Trotskyist-led contingent in an anti-fascist mobilization.

On the most general level Andropov and the bureaucrats he represents are counterposed to everything that Trotsky fought for. Need we remind you that it was one of Andropov's predecessors, Stalin, who murdered Trotsky? It is no joke to blur the blood line between Stalinism and Trotskyism.

While the motives for adopting such a name as a "factional jibe" are known only to yourselves, we presume that you are trying to make some kind of equation between Andropov sycophancy and Soviet defensism. Certainly the question of defense of the USSR is posed point blank by the Reagan administration's drive toward World War III. However, the successful defense of the degenerated Soviet workers state is continually undermined by the policies of Andropov and the caste he represents. Reagan's widening war drive cannot be successfully countered with phoney "peace offensives" and calls for new "arms limitation talks."

The gains of October can only finally be secured when they are expanded to include the entire planet. This however would mean, among other things, the end of the privileged position of Andropov and Co. It is therefore no accident that they seek to use their influence in the international working class as a bargaining chip in a futile attempt to placate the imperialists' insatiable desire to "roll back communism." One of the fundamentals of Trotskyism is that the effective defense of the Soviet Union is inextricably linked to the necessity of proletarian political revolution against Andropov and his caste and the renewal of the struggle for world revolution. To paraphrase a currently popular Spartacist slogan, "You can't defend the Soviet Union with Yuri Andropovs."

Comradely,

Toronto Members of the External Tendency of the iSt

Correspondence With Robertson

Toronto Members of the "External Tendency"
Box 332, Adelaide Street Station
Toronto, Ontario

10 January 1983

Dear comrades:

Thank you for your letter dated 13 December 1982 and for the endorsed cheque for \$25.00 toward our successful but inevitably expensive D.C. anti-Klan demonstration.

In your letter you write, "On the most general level Andropov and the bureaucrats he represents are counterposed to everything that Trotsky fought for." In the 1952 factional struggle in the SWP the majority got itself saddled with "Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through and to the core" -- a more poetic version of your position. But Trotsky and the consistent Trotskyists have been aware of the dual role of the Soviet bureaucracy both as economic disorganizers and social and political oppressors on the one hand, and, on the other, interested in their own survival at the head of the deformed workers states over which they preside. Adolf Hitler was made sharply aware of the latter aspect of their contradictory role.

In 1982 and in the capital city of American imperialism the "Yuri Andropov Brigade" was not to be taken by anybody (not even your goodselves) as a symbol of capitulation to imperialism or oppressor of proletarian uprisings. Have you so little empathy with the ground-down black people of D.C., threatened on all sides by vicious police, as not to be able to feel their glee on hearing that the Yuri Andropov Brigade is hitting town? It is sad and significant that it is necessary to point this out to you. And must reflect your considerable drift from Soviet defensism among other things.

Rest assured that neither the SL nor the Soviet bureaucracy is under any misapprehension as to the division between us, namely the question of political revolution in the Soviet Union and throughout the deformed workers states. We, for our part, view this as inextricable from the unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union against American or other imperialisms.

Perhaps you misunderstood our intention in another way. Certainly Trotsky wrote, and the Hungarian revolution verified, that under the impact of political revolution the ordinarily rigid and stratified despotic bureaucracy, not being a social/economic class, will itself undergo profound differentiation -- with some, the most corrupt and bourgeoisified, making common cause with the capitalist-imperialist counterrevolution, and at the other extreme some throwing in their lot with the workers in the Leninist soviet democratization. Standing at the very summit of the Soviet bureaucracy, Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov is hardly likely to be among the latter. But let me assure you, comrades, it is easier to conceive of him in that role than, for example, Andre Sakharov, pervasively a political supporter of U.S. imperialism.

It may be illuminating for you to consider what Trotsky said in November 1935, "Re Tactics of American Workers During a Japanese-Soviet War":

"Suppose we do not know where [war] goods are going, we must rely upon the SU agents in America, who should have information, since the SU would

have buying agents for war material in the USA. We would need a united front with the SU bureaucracy on this. If we agitated against the loading of war goods bought by the SU in America, we would be having a united front not with the SU agents but with Japanese agents who would no doubt be represented in the working-class movement." (our emphasis [JR's])

Fraternally
J.M. Robertson
for the SL/U.S. PB

P.S. 6 August 1983 -- This letter was written some months ago and lay as unfinished draft. Am getting it out now as part of our pre-Conference discussion. Sorry for the delay and do appreciate receiving your views and money. JR.

October 28, 1983

Dear Comrade Robertson:

Thank you for being so good as to send us a copy of your reply to our letter of 13 December, 1982. Please be assured that we have given it our most careful consideration.

Frankly we were a bit disappointed with your letter. You defend so adamantly (but so poorly) what is so clearly a mistake. Perhaps it is a mistake that you feel some personal responsibility for. We sympathize with the inherent difficulties of attempting to develop a coherent defense of the "Yuri Andropov Brigade" within the programmatic framework of Trotskyism, but even so we were disappointed. We had somehow expected more from you.

You quote a line from our letter that "On the most general level Andropov and the bureaucrats he represents are counterposed to everything that Trotsky fought for." We would have thought that this was a fairly unobjectionable statement among Trotskyists. Leon Trotsky throughout his life fought for international proletarian revolution; Stalin was the "gravedigger" of revolutions.

But after quoting the above line you choose not to take it up at all. Instead you attempt to substitute a position which we do not hold which, you assure us, is only a "more poetic version" of the same thing. But it is not. We reject the erroneous position of the Dobbs-Cannon SWP majority in 1952-53 with which you attempt to saddle us ("Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through and to the core"). We reject adulation of Yuri Andropov for the same reason -- because it negates the contradictory character of the Stalinist bureaucracy and thus constitutes a departure from Trotskyism. Of course, from your point of view the position has the advantage of being considerably easier to knock down -- an attribute it shares with other straw men.

If all you are searching for is a more lyrical rendering of the idea which we were seeking to convey, you might wish to consider the following passage by Trotsky:

"Stalinism originated not as an organic outgrowth of Bolshevism but as a negation of Bolshevism consummated in blood. The process of this negation is mirrored very graphically in the history of the Central Committee. Stalinism had to exterminate first politically and then physically the leading

cadres of Bolshevism in order to become what it now is: an apparatus of the privileged, a brake upon historical progress, an agency of world imperialism. Stalinism and Bolshevism are mortal enemies."

("A Graphic History of Bolshevism," 7 June 1939)

Not merely "counterposed," but "mortal enemies!" He puts it so nicely. Of course despite this assessment Trotsky remained, as do we, firmly Soviet defensist. The two positions are mutually exclusive only in the minds of Stalinist sycophants. Surely we could agree that "on the most general level" Glen Watts and Lane Kirkland are counterposed to class-struggle militants in the unions? Yet is it not easy to imagine situations where we would both find ourselves in a military bloc with these treacherous parasites? Same thing.

Of course the Soviet bureaucracy has a dual nature. But your reply dodges the key point that we made in our original letter: "You can't defend the Soviet Union with Yuri Andropovs." You claim to continue to recognize the "inextricable" connection between military defense and political revolution in the Soviet Union. But, those who adulate Stalin's heirs act to undermine the defense of the Soviet Union. Let us refer you once again to comrade Trotsky:

"...I consider the main source of danger to the USSR in the present international situation to be Stalin and the oligarchy headed by him. An open struggle against them, in the view of world public opinion, is inseparably connected for me with the defense of the USSR."

("Stalin After the Finnish Experience," 13 March 1940)

Of course, one cannot rule out in theory the possibility which you raise that a Stalin or an Andropov might throw in his lot with the insurgent proletariat in the course of a political revolution. (We imagine that such a development is somewhat less probable than the prospect of you declaring for the External Tendency.) Obviously, openly pro-imperialist elements, like Sakharov, are even less likely to support the workers than Andropov. So what? The necessity for an "open struggle against" the Stalinist oligarchs is in no way obviated by that.

As for the hypothetical glee experienced by blacks in D.C. upon hearing of the advent of the Yuri Andropov Brigade, would they have been any less happy about a John Brown, Frederick Douglass or Leon Trotsky Brigade? As a matter of fact, we have our doubts as to whether any of the "ground-down black people of D.C." actually ever heard of the Yuri Andropov Brigade. How could they -- it wasn't among the endorsers of the demonstration. If any of Washington's black population did feel gleeful about that name on a bus from New York, imagine their pleasure had the Yuri Andropov Brigade ventured a little further out of the closet and paraded down Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House holding aloft pictures of its namesake! But of course to do that, the "semi-facetious" semi-disclaimer would have to be disregarded and you would no longer be the leader of a Trotskyist organization.

We can only imagine that the final "illuminating" red herring that you toss our way regarding a united front with the Kremlin for Soviet defensism is intended to distract the attention of the unsophisticated readers of your internal bulletin. (Just to be absolutely clear, let us assure you that we entirely agree with the point which Trotsky makes in the quote you cite.) Or are you perhaps trying to suggest that parading around Washington as the "Yuri Andropov Brigade" would somehow constitute a military bloc with the Kremlin for the defense of the USSR? If that's what you mean why not come out and say so?

Calling yourselves the "Yuri Andropov Brigade" was a mistake. All of your very considerable political experience as well as the talents of the capable and devoted Marxists who produce WV can't change that. If we were to offer you some advice it would be this: don't try to defend the indefensible, it can only produce bad results.

For several decades you played a critical role in preserving, defending and even developing the Trotskyist program. But you didn't thereby acquire proprietary rights to it. Adulation of a Stalinist bureaucrat can neither be squared with fidelity to Trotskyism in general nor with Soviet defensism in particular. We doubt that you would even have tried ten years ago.

The fact that you find it so necessary to cling to this error, indeed the fact that it could occur in the first place, is evidence that the leadership of the SL/US, with you at the apex, is losing its political bearings. This can only be a reflection of the atrophy of confidence in the possibility of building a mass Bolshevik party capable of leading the seizure of power by the working class.

There is a necessary and reciprocal relationship between the loss of communist cutting edge and the destruction of internal democracy in a revolutionary organization. For a Bolshevik tendency, especially a small propaganda group in conditions of bourgeois democracy, a vigorous and democratic internal life is not a desirable option but a vital necessity if the organization is to be able to respond effectively to the changing developments of the class struggle. Unfortunately the SL/iSt is no longer an organization which has a healthy internal life -- a development for which you more than any other individual must be held accountable.

Bolshevik greetings,

External Tendency of the iSt

Once Again on Yuri Andropov

"Only Trotskyism Can Defend the Gains of October"

Reprinted below is Reuben Samuels' response to our 28 October 1983 reply to James Robertson on the "Yuri Andropov Brigade," followed by our rejoinder to Samuels.

3 January 1984

[New York]

Dear Comrades,

Your reply of 28 October 1983 regarding the "Yuri Andropov Brigade" collapses the contradictions inherent in the Soviet bureaucracy and Soviet degenerated workers state, thereby vitiating the Trotskyist position of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union when that question has become most urgent.

You consider the key point made in your original letter your paraphrase of our slogan "You Can't Fight Reagan with Democrats" as "You Can't Defend the Soviet Union with Yuri Andropovs." Our slogan is based on the fact that there is no class difference between the twin parties of the American imperialist bourgeoisie. Do you mean to imply that there is no class difference between imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy? Then you thereby reject Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet degenerated workers state as well. "Oh, no," you protest. But your all-too-clever and very revealing paraphrase of our slogan is ambiguous at best. Can the Soviet Union be defended with Marshals Ustinov and Ogarkov, who are also part of the bureaucracy and who helped engineer Andropov's rise to power? Is the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan then not to be hailed and the Soviet handling of the KAL 007 provocation to be condemned?

Your position is reminiscent of the statement: "We have never supported the Kremlin's international policy." Before you grow too enamored of that formula let me remind you that its author was Max Shachtman in the 1939-40 fight over the Russian question. About it Trotsky observed:

"In its present foreign as well as domestic policy, the bureaucracy places first and foremost for defense its own parasitic interests. To that extent we wage mortal struggle against it, but in the final analysis, through the interests of the bureaucracy, in a very distorted form the interests of the workers' state are reflected. These interests we defend -- with our own methods."

-- "From a Scratch to the Danger of Gangrene," *In Defense of Marxism*, p. 127

Trotskyism provides a coherent world-view in which the contradictory character of the Stalinist bureaucracy is reflected. Your assertion, "On the most general level Andropov and the bureaucrats he represents are counterposed to everything that Trotsky fought for," is both undialectical and very distant from Trotskyism.

Do you not believe that under the gun of Reagan's anti-Soviet war drive the Soviet bureaucracy may be compelled to take certain measures, albeit deformed and partial, to defend the state power from which they reap their privileges? It is no accident that in this hour of grave peril the bureaucracy has placed at its head Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov. An interesting account of Andropov's character and rise to power can be found in Zhores Medvedev's recent book *Andropov*. There is no love lost between this Soviet biologist and dissident and the former head of the KGB who incarcerated him in a mental hospital and exiled him. Nevertheless, Medvedev contrasts Andropov to Brezhnev, who "was not a real leader in 1964, but the representative of the bureaucracy which sought a quieter, safer, more secure, privileged life" (p. 196). Andropov is known as a decisive and efficient administrator who used the KGB not only to persecute dissidents but to fight crime and corruption in the highest levels of the bureaucracy, including Brezhnev's immediate family. Confronted by Reagan's nuclear Armageddon, the bureaucracy evidently felt the need for a leader who would shake out the sloth, corruption and mismanagement of the Brezhnev years.

Of course the bureaucracy cannot reform itself as neo-Bukharinites like the Medvedev brothers believe. It will take the restoration of soviet democracy through proletarian political revolution to unleash the productive resources of the Soviet workers state. And as comrade Robertson wrote you, in our view, that political revolution is inextricably linked to the unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union against American and other imperialisms.

Your comparison of Andropov with Stalin and Beria, the mass murderers of tens of thousands of Communists and Red Army officers, is an obscene amalgam worthy of the pages of *Commentary*. Andropov's entire political career was shaped by a more tranquil period domestically. To hold him personally responsible for the psychopathological mass crimes of Stalin reflects the methodology that holds the bureaucracy to be a homogenous reactionary mass counterrevolutionary through and through -- i.e., a new exploiting class. Given this methodology there is no distinction between a Guevara heroically fighting for social revolution arms in hand and a Corvalán who disarmed the workers in the face of counter-revolution, since they both were Latin American Stalinists. It is worthy of those who make no distinction between a Ramón Mercader and a Leopold Trepper, between a Mark Zborowski and a Kim Philby, since they were all agents of Stalin's murderous secret police. This methodology can never account for, much less attract, an Ignace Reiss. He served as an officer of the GPU at the very height of Stalin's terror, and declared for the Fourth International at the cost of his life precisely because he saw in it the unstained banner of revolutionary *Soviet defensism*. To paraphrase comrade Robertson's reply to you: sitting at the summit of the Soviet bureaucracy, Andropov is unlikely to follow the path of Ignace Reiss. But it is infinitely easier to see him in that role than (if you will not have Sakharov) the Douglas Frasers of the world who have placed themselves countless times in the direct service of the *imperialist* secret police.

Truth is concrete; therefore it is hardly surprising that there is not a word in your letters about the concrete conditions in which the Russian question is posed today: the crisis of U.S. and other imperialisms finds no other escape than thermonuclear Armageddon against the Soviet Union, imperiling not only the working-class gains of the Russian October but the very survival of humanity. This is manifestly a period of enhanced dangers for our small revolutionary party. It is as well a

time of enhanced opportunities for us, as shown for example by our demonstrated capacity to lead large numbers of blacks and other working people in mass struggles against the fascist race-terrorists. A number of our softer and weaker members, intimidated by the dangers (and often equally intimidated by the obligations posed by our new opportunities), have departed the Spartacist tendency, including yourselves. But when the KKK threatened to march on 27 November 1982 the issues posed prompted many ex-members from New York to head for D.C. with us. We were pleased to have so many former members turn out (without of course making any political concessions to them). Fascists are the domestic shock troops for Reagan's anti-Soviet war drive; therefore it was entirely appropriate as well as ironic to dub this contingent in the Labor/Black Mobilization the "Yuri Andropov Brigade," which was appreciated by most if not all of its participants. The only protest has come from the "External Tendency," which while capable of travelling all over the country to attend SL functions (and speaking without hindrance) were at this historic victory conspicuous by their absence.

And no one in Washington that day would have mistaken the Yuri Andropov Brigade as a concession to Stalinism. The real Kremlin sycophants and Stalinoids, the Communist Party and its various satellites (Marcyites, Guardianites, Trendites, CLP, CWP, etc.) were busy in the service of the anti-Soviet popular front building a Democratic Party rally at McPherson Square. Or, not wanting to confront the Democrats in Congress and City Hall, they were, like yourselves, absent.

Finally, we note -- and your puerile affectation of superciliousness does not disguise -- that despite yourselves you must pay the Leninist democracy of the Spartacist League its due. For as you attest, this exchange, as with any serious (and even not so serious) criticism or polemic against the SL, will find its place in an internal bulletin or some other suitable format. What other tendency is so solicitous of healthy internal life and education of its membership as to publish a series like *Hate Trotskyism*, *Hate the Spartacist League*? No, comrades, we esteem that rich party democracy necessary to forging centralized revolutionary clarity and determination in action, that democracy which you voluntarily placed yourselves outside of in this period of urgent revolutionary tasks.

We know what our duty is and we stand at our posts. As Trotsky wrote on the eve of the Second World War:

"The workers' state must be taken as it has emerged from the merciless laboratory of history and not as it is imagined by a 'socialist' professor, reflectively exploring his nose with his finger. It is the duty of revolutionists to defend every conquest of the working class even though it may be distorted by the pressure of hostile forces. Those who cannot defend old positions will never conquer new ones."

-- "Balance Sheet of the Finnish Events," *In Defense of Marxism*, p. 178

Fraternally,
Reuben Samuels



YURI VLADIMIROVICH ANDROPOV
1914-1984

He sought to curb
the worst excesses
of the bureaucracy.

He sought to
increase the
productivity of
the Soviet masses.

He made no overt
betrayals on behalf
of imperialism.

He was no friend
of freedom.

WORKERS VANGUARD

No. 348 17 February 1984

April 22, 1984

Dear Comrade Samuels:

We were pleased to see part of our exchange on the "Yuri Andropov Brigade" published in *Workers Vanguard* No. 348. It must have seemed a trifle peculiar to your readers that the correspondence began with our rejoinder to your reply to our original letter. We think that *WV*'s audience would probably have received a better impression of what is at issue had you also printed the first two letters in the exchange. We hope that you will not take it as "superciliousness" if we suggest that perhaps the reason you did not do so was to save Comrade Robertson embarrassment.

You reject our slogan: "You Can't Defend the Soviet Union with Yuri Andropovs" on the grounds that its prototype was "based on the fact that there is no class difference between the twin parties of the American imperialist bourgeoisie." This argument is entirely illegitimate. The "You Can't Fight..." format has been widely adapted by the sections of the iSt. Does the TLC's slogan "You Can't Fight Trudeau with the NDP" (*Spartacist Canada* No. 55, September 1982) or the TLD's slogan "You Can't Fight Strauss with the SPD" (*Spartakist* No. 45, October 1982) mean that you now consider the social-democratic NDP and SPD to be bourgeois parties? Of course not.

Your attempt to discover an implication in our slogan that Andropov and his associates could never do *anything* which would contribute to the defense of the USSR is rather tortured. In fact, our slogan is a corollary of "Only Trotskyism Can Defend the Gains of October" which appears as a headline in the Autumn 1983 issue of English-language *Spartacist*. Both are open to the same "clever" sophistic criticisms (unless you want to argue that Yuri Andropov was some kind of Trotskyist).

Obviously the bureaucracy has an interest in defending the social relations which underlie its rule. Yet, as Trotsky observed:

"This bureaucracy is first and foremost concerned with its power, its prestige, its revenues. It defends itself much better than it defends the USSR. It defends itself at the expense of the USSR and at the expense of the world proletariat."

-- *In Defense of Marxism*, p. 176

The bureaucracy (personified by Andropov or any of his predecessors or successors) is, as Trotsky noted in the *Transitional Program*, in the final analysis "the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers' state." It is incapable of guaranteeing the survival of the gains of October. On the contrary, "each day added to its domination helps rot the foundations of the socialist elements of economy and increases the chances for capitalist restoration" (ibid.).

Stalin, Andropov, Chernenko, Brezhnev, the Marshals Ustinov and Ogarkov and the rest of the Stalinist caste may well undertake particular measures which enhance the capacity of the degenerated workers state to defend itself. But in a larger sense, the bureaucracy is an impediment to the defense of the socialized property forms on which its rule rests. Trotsky and the authentic Trotskyists have always maintained that the defense of the gains of October requires a political revolution to oust the Stalinists (Andropov/Chernenko et al.).

"...the October Revolution is not definitely assassinated by the bureaucracy, and...the last is forced by its position to take measures which we must defend in a given situation against imperialist enemies. These progressive measures are, of course, incomparably less important than the general counterrevolutionary activity of the bureaucracy: it is why we find it necessary to overthrow the bureaucracy..."

-- *In Defense of Marxism*, p. 23

Dialectics and the Nature of the USSR

We "counterposed" Trotsky to Andropov. You characterize this as "undialectical and very distant from Trotskyism," but you refuse to tackle the substantive points which we raised. You pass over, without comment, Trotsky's observation (which we cite) that Stalinism is the "negation of Bolshevism [i.e., Trotskyism] consummated in blood." You also ignore our analogy with the trade-union bureaucracy which, like the Soviet oligarchy, is episodically forced to take measures in defense of the proletarian organizations which it sits atop and yet remains "counterposed" to the policies of class-struggle militants in those same unions.

Here's what Trotsky had to say about "dialectics" and the nature of the Soviet Union in the 1939-40 fight:

"It is not surprising that the theoreticians of the opposition who reject dialectic thought capitulate lamentably before the contradictory nature of the USSR. However the contradiction between the social basis laid down by the revolution, and the character of the caste which arose out of the degeneration of the revolution is not

only an irrefutable historical fact but also a motor force. In our struggle for the overthrow of the bureaucracy we base ourselves on this contradiction."

-- *In Defense of Marxism*, p. 53

For Trotsky, unlike your goodself, the axis of the dialectical contradiction in Soviet society is not *within* the bureaucracy (energetic Andropov versus sluggish Brezhnev), but between the bonapartist oligarchy and the social structure from which it derives its parasitic existence. This naturally conditions the Trotskyist attitude toward the relationship between the defense of the Soviet Union and the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy. It is the responsibility of revolutionists to defend the Soviet Union *despite* the rule of Yuri Andropov and his caste -- but not in his name!

Your second-rate Kremlinologizing about Andropov's role in the Politburo is amusing. (First-rate Kremlinologists have the dubious benefit of CIA reports to work from.) You suggest that Andropov's appointment represented a substantial policy shift for Moscow: "confronted by Reagan's nuclear Armageddon, the bureaucracy evidently felt the need for a leader who would shake out the sloth, corruption and mismanagement of the Brezhnev years." How then do you account for the election of Chernenko -- a Brezhnev crony and reportedly Andropov's chief rival in 1982 -- as his successor? We are content to leave such speculation to the Pabloites.

Andropov and Stalin

In preparing the cadres of the Fourth International for the revolutionary defense of the USSR in the first weeks of World War II, Trotsky delineated the correct attitude toward the bureaucracy:

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

"This kind of 'defense of the USSR' will naturally differ, as heaven does from earth, from the official defense which is now being conducted under the slogan: 'For the Fatherland! For Stalin!' *Our* defense of the USSR is carried on under the slogan: 'For Socialism! For the World Revolution! Against Stalin!' In order that these two varieties of 'defense of the USSR' do not become confused in the consciousness of the masses it is necessary to know clearly and precisely how to formulate slogans which correspond to the concrete situation."

-- *In Defense of Marxism*, p. 20 (emphasis in original)

Trotsky's Soviet-defensist slogan "For Socialism! For the World Revolution! Against Stalin!" was not based merely on his appreciation of the personal qualities of Joseph Stalin, but rather on the latter's position as the personification of the Thermidorian bureaucracy. Today that

position is held by Konstantin Chernenko and, until a few short months ago, by Yuri Andropov. Proclaiming your Soviet-defensist contingent the "Yuri Andropov Brigade" could only confuse the Trotskyist attitude toward the defense of the USSR in the consciousness of whatever masses were exposed to it. And therein lies our objection to it.

The crux of your argument eventually devolves on your profoundly revisionist assertion that it is "obscene" to compare Yuri Andropov with Joseph Stalin. This you say is worthy of *Commentary*. But this must be taken to mean you think that: (a) Andropov is in some sense closer to Leninism than his predecessor and/or (b) he is in some sense less a representative of the bureaucratic caste which strangled the political rule of the working class in the Soviet Union and/or (c) the caste which he represented has in some fundamental sense been transformed since the time of Stalin. Any of these positions belong in *Pravda* or in the *Daily World*, but certainly not in a newspaper purporting to be Trotskyist.

Andropov couldn't be held personally responsible for the crimes of Stalin -- just as Reagan is not personally responsible for the decisions of Herbert Hoover. But Andropov was the inheritor of the monstrous bureaucratic regime that Stalin created. If Andropov didn't undertake the wholesale liquidation of authentic Bolsheviks, it was only because his predecessors had already done such a good job. In his role as KGB chief he was ruthlessly effective in harassing, suppressing and breaking potential Bolshevik critics of the regime. Under Andropov's direction in the 1970s, the KGB made widespread use of mental hospitals to "rehabilitate" the bureaucracy's political opponents. (See "Stop Stalinist 'Psychiatric' Torture in the USSR," *WV* No. 96, 13 February 1976.)

Andropov Obit: Three Out Four Ain't Bad?

We note that Andropov scored a 75% approval rating in his "in memoriam" box in *WV* No. 348. Three out of four ain't bad. But we don't rate him so highly. Andropov's failure to make any "overt betrayals on behalf of imperialism" can properly be attributed to his short tenure in office. He certainly didn't send any more MIGs to Nicaragua or AK-47s to the Salvadoran leftists than his predecessor. He did want to raise productivity -- but big deal, so did Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev. (In any case, Trotskyists must view any productivity schemes devised by the bureaucracy skeptically since they usually have an anti-working class character. Trotsky was no endorser of Stakhanovism!) Any sensible top-ranking bureaucrat is going to be interested in curbing "the worst excesses of the bureaucracy" in order to increase the efficiency, security and stability of the regime he runs. Your little homily for Andropov focuses on his subjective intentions rather than the objective inevitability, and even necessity, of corruption and inefficiency in a planned economy run by bureaucratic fiat and secret police. You take a semi-Deutscherite approach and, it would appear, arrive at semi-Deutscherite conclusions.

The working class lost nothing when Yuri Andropov died. Regrettably his career as a Stalinist bureaucrat was terminated by kidney disease rather than by an insurgent Soviet working class determined to smash the rule of the Brezhnevs, Chernenkos and Andropovs and to return to the path of Lenin and Trotsky.

In Defense of Ignace Reiss

While you purport to find the comparison of Andropov with Stalin "obscene," you are prepared to float a truly obscene comparison -- Yuri Andropov and Ignace Reiss. Of course, you do so with the disclaimer that it is "unlikely" that Andropov would "follow the path of Ignace Reiss," but you contend that only your "methodology" (which locates the key contradiction within Soviet society within the ruling caste) can "account for" and even "attract" an Ignace Reiss. This was not Trotsky's view -- nor is it ours. The essential contradiction in Soviet society, as we noted above, is between the parasitic bureaucracy and the socialized property forms which it sits atop.

"The question is *how to get rid of the Soviet bureaucracy* which oppresses and robs the workers and peasants, leads the conquests of October to ruin, and is the chief obstacle on the road to the international revolution. We have long ago come to the conclusion that this can be attained only by the violent overthrow of the bureaucracy, that is, by means of a a new political revolution.

"Of course, in the ranks of the bureaucracy there are sincere and revolutionary elements of the Reiss type. But they are not numerous and in any case they do not determine the political physiognomy of the bureaucracy which is a centralized Thermidorian caste crowned by the Bonapartist clique of Stalin. We may be sure that the more decisive the discontent of the toilers becomes the deeper will the differentiation within the bureaucracy penetrate. But in order to achieve this we must theoretically comprehend, politically mobilize and organize the *hatred of the masses against the bureaucracy as the ruling caste.*"

-- "It is Necessary to Drive the Bureaucracy and the New Aristocracy Out of the Soviets," 4 July 1938 (emphasis in original)

In reprinting this article in 1954, the editors of the SWP's *Fourth International* noted that it had "a special timeliness today in view of the challenge to the traditional Trotskyist concepts by the Pabloite revisionists." Unfortunately, today it is of "special timeliness" for the iSt. We affirm the position elaborated by Trotsky against your own. The way to regroup the Ignace Reiss elements in the bureaucracy is by intransigent opposition to the ruling caste -- not by mourning their demise nor by parading around as their North American deputies.

And Yuri Andropov was no Ignace Reiss. He had his chance to go over to the workers. He was the Soviet ambassador to Hungary in 1956. Unlike Peter Fryer, the British Stalinist journalist who broke with Stalinism to solidarize with the insurgent Hungarian proletariat, Andropov, according to all accounts, played a significant role in the suppression of that attempted political revolution. Zhores Medvedev, who you quote as an authority in your reply to us, and who is a believer in the self-reform of the bureaucracy, cites Bill Lomax as the author of one of the "more reliable studies of the Hungarian uprising." He refers in particular to an article which Lomax wrote for the *Times Higher Education Supplement* on Andropov's role. Last February, when comrade Riley of the ET talked to you in Toronto, you indicated agnosticism on Andropov's role in Hungary. We have therefore included a copy of this article for your reference. Lomax observes that: "In the first months of direct military sup-

pression of the revolution, Andropov was effectively the Soviet overlord of Hungary...It was in this period that the last remnants of armed resistance were wiped out, the workers' and intellectuals' organizations crushed, and tens of thousands of Hungarians arrested and interned...." This is a powerful indictment of the decision by the leadership of the SL/US to besmirch its Trotskyist heritage by association with this unlamented Stalinist bureaucrat.

Andropov and Stalin may have differed on secondary matters of style and approach -- but not on program. The difference between Andropov and Reiss is fundamental. It is the difference between Stalinism and Bolshevism. We find it alarming that you seem incapable of getting this right.

Yet you have not given up your claim to Trotskyism. You still ostensibly recognize the "inextricable connection" between political revolution and Soviet defensism. But you want to claim that only those who are prepared to identify themselves with the bureaucracy (and parading around as a "Yuri Andropov Brigade" can only mean that) can have a properly defensist attitude. You can't have it both ways -- either Andropov was a big improvement over Stalin and was capable of effectively organizing the defense of the USSR or he was qualitatively the same as Stalin and was, therefore, in the final analysis, an obstacle to the defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state. Either Deutscherism or Trotskyism!

Purging, Flinching and the Reagan Years

We find your explanation of why so many former iSt cadres, including ourselves, are no longer in the tendency (pressures of the Reagan years) more than a little disingenuous. The depletion of the cadres of the iSt in recent years is largely, although not exclusively, the result of a series of irrational and usually apolitical purges orchestrated by the top leadership. We have written about this at some length elsewhere so we won't belabor the point here. If your memory of this is a bit hazy, we suggest that you go and listen to the tapes of some of the meetings prior to which the comrades of the ET (and many others) were driven out of the organization. We regret that we succumbed to these various campaigns and -- as you know -- are seeking to rectify our mistake in leaving the iSt by reapplying. We promise you that we won't make the same mistake again.

You'd like to pass off your sycophantic "Yuri Andropov" bus as a gutsy (if semi-facetious) defense of the USSR. But, as we have noted before, when Reagan started to turn on the pressure after the downing of the KAL 007 spy-flight, you flinched. You suddenly announced that your defense of the Soviet Union is *conditional* on the safety of airline passengers. There is no other interpretation of your statement that if the Soviets knew that 007 was a passenger aircraft, then to shoot it down was "worse than a barbaric atrocity...despite the potential military damage of such an apparent spying mission" (WV No. 337, 9 September 1983).

Let us briefly dispose of a few supplementary arguments which you advance to excuse the "Yuri Andropov" bus. (1) The fact that fascists hate the USSR does not make it "entirely appropriate" to parade around as the "Yuri Andropov Brigade." Hitler hated the Soviet Union too, but the revolutionary SWP of the 1930s didn't march around as the "Joseph Stalin Brigade" at the anti-fascist mobilizations which it initiated. (2) The fact that

"the real Kremlin sycophants" were busy building a rally for the Democratic Party is quite irrelevant. Militant Andropov sycophancy is no more Trotskyist than its "peaceful-legal" variant. (3) Your attempt to make a big deal out of the fact that we weren't at the 27 November rally is cheap demagogy. In the only two cities where we had locals at the time, the vast majority of your own comrades didn't attend! In Toronto when one of our members approached two of your supporters in the week before the rally to inquire about transportation arrangements, he was told that Toronto wasn't going. So we were no more "conspicuous by our absence" in D.C. than the bulk of the comrades from the TLC and the Bay Area Spartacist League.

Finally, we would remind you of the old adage that "self-praise stinks." Our suggestion that the irrelevant quote tacked on the end of comrade Robertson's feeble reply was probably designed to mislead unsophisticated readers of your internal bulletin, was in no sense homage ("despite ourselves") to the SL's internal democracy. We would not have assumed that it would be published in an internal bulletin had we not received our copy of it in the form of two mimeographed pages (numbered pages 40 and 41) in the format of your internal discussion bulletin.

We have applied to join the iSt as a tendency (see our letters of 15 February and 12 March) on the basis of our continuing substantial programmatic agreement, with the prospect of struggling politically within the organization to correct those positions (including the "Yuri Andropov Brigade") where the leadership is departing from the path of Trotskyism.

Yours for Trotskyism,

External Tendency of the iSt

Medvedev on Andropov and Stalin

"Foreign journalists reporting from Moscow found to their great surprise that Muscovites were looking forward to having a new leader, despite Andropov's KGB background. Russians were not only ready for change, they also wanted a strong man at their head. For some time foreign visitors had been amazed by an apparent revival in Stalin's popularity. Pictures of Stalin reappeared in private apartments and publicly in the windows of taxi-cabs....This was a silent demonstration against Brezhnev's inefficient rule and artificial 'personality cult.'"

-- Zhores Medvedev, *Andropov*, p. 13

Andropov as ambassador

Bill Lomax tells how the USSR representative manipulated the Hungarian leaders in the 1956 uprising.

The new Soviet leader, Yuri Andropov, has been variously described as an intellectual, a moderate, and even a liberal. It has been said that he advised against Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, and also in Hungary in 1956 - claims somewhat at odds with the fact that on both occasions he played a major role in the operations. Other commentators have presented more dramatic accounts of his involvement in the betrayal, capture and execution of the leaders of the Hungarian uprising, including the prime minister Imre Nagy.

It is certainly a curious coincidence that Andropov's appointment should occur just as we approach the 25th anniversary of the year in which Imre Nagy was secretly tried and executed, for, as Soviet ambassador to Hungary in 1956, Yuri Andropov played a key role in handling the Nagy government during the revolution, and later pressuring the new government during the revolution, and later pressuring the new government of János Kádár into handing Imre Nagy over into Soviet custody. It also seems to have been Andropov who was responsible for persuading Kádár into handing Imre Nagy over into Soviet custody. It also seems to have been Andropov who was responsible for persuading Kádár, the Communist Party leader who at first backed Imre Nagy, to part with his former comrades and throw in his lot with the Soviet invasion.

At the time of the uprising, on October 23 1956, János Kádár was not the favoured choice of the Soviet leaders, whose most trusted confidant was Ferenc Münnich, an old KGB hand who had been an agent of the Comintern in the 1930s, and an officer in the Soviet army in the 1940s. Münnich, however, was not at the time in Budapest, but in Bel-

grade as Hungarian ambassador to Tito's Yugoslavia.

When the revolution broke out in Hungary, he went immediately to the Soviet embassy in Belgrade, where he remained for several days, in constant touch with the Soviet leaders. Towards the end of October he returned to Budapest, already well briefed on the Soviets' plans, and on October 27 he assumed the key post of minister of the interior in the new government of Imre Nagy.

In Hungary, meanwhile, the Soviet leaders Mikoyan and Suslov were guests of Andropov in the Soviet embassy. It was here, on the morning of October 28, that they informed Imre Nagy he had the full backing of the Soviet leadership for his governmental changes and programme of reforms.

Looking back, this manoeuvre was clearly a means of buying time while Khrushchev and Malenkov, in a mad flight around Europe, were seeking the support of other East block leaders, including Tito, for their planned invasion. It was also while the Soviet forces in Hungary were being regrouped and reinforced for the coming action. As these preparations were going ahead, Andropov was skilfully holding the fort in Budapest.

By the end of October, the influx of new Soviet forces into Hungary was so massive as to be no longer deniable - except by Andropov who, summoned before Imre Nagy on the morning of November 1, declared he knew nothing of them. Returning a short while later, after consulting his government, Andropov explained that while new forces had indeed entered the country, this was only to restore discipline among those already there and to assist in their withdrawal. But he adamantly refused Nagy's request to give a commitment that no further Soviet forces

would enter Hungary.

Unsatisfied with this answer, Imre Nagy summoned both the Communist Party leadership and the Council of Ministers, and after considerable discussion the government decided to declare Hungarian neutrality and to unilaterally withdraw from the Warsaw Pact. In mid-afternoon, Andropov was again summoned to the parliament to be personally informed of these decisions.

It was here that the Party leader János Kádár angrily rebuked him with the charge that while there had as yet been no counter-revolution in Hungary, there could be one if the Soviets provoked it. Should they be so foolish as to send their tanks once again against Budapest, he as a Hungarian and as a Communist would have no choice but to fight, arms in hand, against them, alongside the Hungarian workers.

A few hours later, Kádár was to meet Andropov again, this time in the Soviet embassy, where he had been taken by Ferenc Münnich, completing the mission with which he had returned to Budapest. The Soviet government, Andropov now informed Kádár, did indeed plan to send its tanks again into Budapest. The decision had already been taken, and it was János Kádár's duty as a Communist to support it.

Kádár was then flown out of Hungary to the Soviet Union where, at Uzhgorod in the Carpatho-Ukraine, he conferred with other East bloc leaders, and with Khrushchev himself on the latter's return from his visit to Tito. Münnich, meanwhile, proceeded to the Hungarian town of Szolnok, 50 miles to the east of Budapest, where he brought together a core of hard-line Stalinists to form a government that would support the Soviet a med suppression of the revolution.

On the afternoon of November 4, several hours after the start of the new Soviet attack, they were joined by János Kádár, whom the Soviet leaders had finally decided, under pressure from the Yugoslavs, to appoint as prime minister rather than Münnich.

Back in Budapest, Andropov himself had also been busy. Though fully aware of the Soviet plans to invade, he approached Nagy on the morning of November 2 with proposals to start negotiations on the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Hungary. He also announced the alarming news that his embassy was under siege from counter-revolutionary insurgents. Unless this state of affairs was brought to an immediate end, he would have no alternative but to resort to the use of Soviet troops in his own defence.

At Imre Nagy's request, General Béla Király, the military commander of Budapest, in the company of a small tank unit, sped hurriedly to the Soviet embassy – only to find its surrounding streets calm and deserted. Andropov had been caught out in a clumsy attempt to fabricate a pretext for the coming Soviet invasion.

The negotiations for the withdrawal of Soviet troops commenced in the Hungarian parliament on the morning of November 3, and were continued in the evening at the Soviet military headquarters at Tököl, several miles to the south of Budapest. The Hungarian delegation was led by the minister of defence, Pál Maléter, the Soviet by General M. S. Malinin, commander-in-chief of Soviet forces in Hungary.

The latter appeared to be negotiating in good faith, and to be taken by surprise when, shortly after midnight, the talks were suddenly interrupted by armed KGB officers – by some accounts, personally led by the head of the KGB, General Ivan Serov – and Maléter and his colleagues were arrested.

Little more than an hour later, the first Soviet troops started to break through Budapest's perimeter defences. As the news reached Imre Nagy, he also received a personal visit from none other than Ambassador Andropov, assuring him that the Soviet Union had no aggressive intentions against Hungary, that some mistake must have occurred, and seeking to dissuade the Hungarian government from taking any defensive measures.

By dawn, however, Soviet forces were engaged in a massive, armed attack on Budapest. Imre Nagy and his ministers fled to safety in the Yugoslav embassy, where they had been offered asylum on the direct intervention of Tito, after his talks with Khrushchev. Shortly afterwards, a radio broadcast announced the

formation of a new government under János Kádár and Ferenc Münnich, who had called for Soviet help to crush the revolution.

Although Kádár was Party leader and prime minister in the new regime, he was by no means fully in charge of events. The strong man, and main *confidante* of the Soviet leaders, remained Ferenc Münnich, who now served as first deputy prime minister and minister in charge of the armed forces and state security. In the first weeks after the revolution, while Kádár acted as a figurehead presenting an image of compromise and conciliation in an attempt to win popular support, real power lay with the Soviet army.

A crucial point in the consolidation of the new regime was reached on November 22 when Imre Nagy was tricked into leaving his asylum in the Yugoslav embassy, an action which resulted in his seizure by the Soviets, and his deportation, against his will, to Romania. Nagy had left the embassy after receiving a written guarantee of safe conduct from the Hungarian prime minister, János Kádár, though there is reasonable doubt as to whether Kádár himself realised that he was involved in an act of treachery.

But Andropov was certainly aware of what was going to happen, for three other members of Nagy's retinue – György Lukács, Zoltán Vas and Zoltán Szántó – had left the embassy four days earlier, only to be seized by Soviet forces and taken to the Soviet military headquarters at Mátyásföld. There they had been visited on the night of November 18 by none other than Ferenc Münnich. It is a reasonable assumption that the abduction, trial and execution of Nagy and his colleagues was masterminded by Münnich and Andropov working together behind Kádár's back.

In the first months of direct military suppression of the revolution, Andropov was effectively the Soviet overlord of Hungary. He was working jointly with the military commanders of the Soviet armed forces in directing the occupation, and establishing the authority of the new Hungarian government.

It was in this period that the last remnants of armed resistance were wiped out, the workers' and intellectuals' organisations crushed, and tens of thousands of Hungarians arrested and interned, but the trials and executions that served to terrorize the population into acquiescing in the new regime came only later, after the initial consolidation in spring 1957. By then, however, Andropov was no longer influencing Hungarian events. Having suffered a heart attack, he was replaced as Soviet ambassador at the beginning of March 1957.

The high point of the trials came more than a year later when Imre Nagy, along with Pál Maléter and other leaders of the revolution, were secretly tried in Budapest, sentenced and executed on June 16, 1958. Though he was no longer so directly concerned with Hungarian affairs, there can be little doubt that the opinion of Andropov, now deputy head of the Soviet Central Committee's department for liaison with other East block parties, was taken into account when deciding on the sentence to be handed out to Nagy.

In retrospect, Yuri Andropov's role in 1956 shows him to have been a ruthless, and highly skilled political operator. From beginning to end he played the role of colonial administrator, manipulating in a calculating and skilful way, the Hungarian leaders – first Nagy, then Kádár – so as to defend the Soviet Union's political and strategic interests, and to keep Hungary within the Soviet sphere of influence. Not ideology or political values, but *raison d'état*, was the motivation of his behaviour.

The author is a sociology lecturer at Nottingham University. His Hungary 1956 (Alison & Busby, 1976) was circulated in Hungary in Samizdat form last year and has now been published in Hungarian by Magyar Füzetek, Paris.

Poland: No Responsibility for Stalinist Crimes!

In our declaration, published in October 1982, we referred to the September 1981 purge in the German section which we noted had been conducted in a "particularly politically demoralizing fashion." We reported the contents of the IEC's "for internal consumption only" motion which was used to get rid of political opposition in the TLD. This motion differed significantly, but subtly, from the position published subsequently in WV. In a discussion with cde. Edwards last winter, cde. Nelson asserted that there was no real difference in the two positions. "We only changed a semi-colon," he said.

In the interests of political clarification we reprint below the IEC motion put forward at the German conference and the version which appeared in WV. The attentive reader will note that while the motion and the WV passage are superficially similar in wording, they are very different in meaning.

Trotskyists give unconditional military support to Stalinist regimes battling internal counterrevolution (i.e., Solidarnosc) or external capitalist forces (i.e., Finland 1940). This is quite a different matter than extending political support to the Stalinists. We take no responsibility for the crimes of the Stalinists against the working people -- whether in the course of military defense of proletarian property forms or otherwise. Military support is extended despite such crimes. The position published in WV 289 is therefore perfectly orthodox Trotskyism -- unlike the IEC motion endorsed by the TLD conference.

If the "secret position" put forward at the German conference were to become the public position of the iSt (which it has not) it would mark a big step by the organization in the direction of becoming a kind of Trotskyoid CLP. That the IEC motion at the German conference is not the real position of the SL is evident from that fact that, to our knowledge, it has never since been reprinted. It was simply a cynical, and deliberate, manoeuvre by the leadership to pose a "loyalty test" for the TLD ranks and to facilitate the bureaucratic purge of the section. The politically correct counterposed motion put forward at the conference by Weber, at that time an opponent in the TLD, is also printed below. This motion was defeated.

Excerpt from the IEC Motion Presented to the TLD Conference, September 1981

While military action on the part of the Warsaw forces against the restorationist forces of Solidarity would itself be pursued in a bureaucratic way, nonetheless, it appears to be time for them to act. We take responsibility in advance for whatever idiocies and atrocities they may commit.

Excerpt from Workers Vanguard No. 289, 25 September 1981

Solidarity's counterrevolutionary course must be stopped! If the Kremlin Stalinists, in their necessarily brutal, stupid way, intervene militarily to stop it,

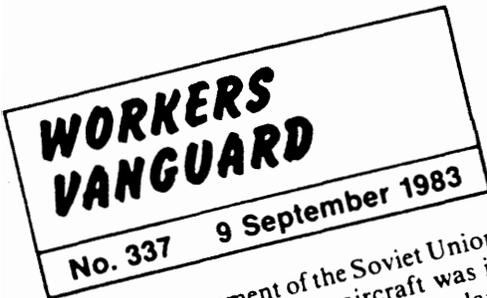
we will support this. And we take responsibility in advance for this; whatever the idiocies and atrocities they will commit, we do not flinch from defending the crushing of Solidarity's counterrevolution.

(emphasis in the original)

Weber's Motion, Directed Against the IEC Motion

The TLD Conference confirms the Trotskyist position of defense of a workers state under the condition that the actual leadership of this defense is through the Stalinist apparatus:

1. every taking of responsibility for the action of the Soviet troops against reactionary rabble;
2. to take no responsibility for acts of anti-proletarian character.



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

What are the Americans up to? As a statement Soviet new- (page 6) TASS



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

WV Flinches on 007

A Textbook Example

The first article in Workers Vanguard on the Soviet termination of the South Korean 007 spy flight (WV No. 337, 9 September) contained a textbook example of flinching on the Russian question. If the Soviets knew that there were 200-plus innocent passengers on board, said WV, then "the act of shooting it down

would have been worse than a barbaric atrocity" regardless of "the potential military damage of such an apparent spying mission." Trotskyists have a different attitude. We say that defense of the Soviet Union includes defense of Soviet airspace. The loss of innocent civilian life was indeed lamentable, but the only "barbaric atrocity" committed was by the South Korean and American spymasters who used these unfortunate people as their unwitting hostages. The Soviets pointed out that when Hitler launched his "drive to the east," the Nazis would frequently herd civilians in front of their advancing armour. Some of these innocent people were inevitably killed by Russian anti-tank fire. Who was to blame? Same thing.

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

Public Relations Demos for Heng Samrin

iSt Betrays Indochinese Trotskyist Heritage

November 30, 1983

Dear Comrades:

We noted with considerable interest your demonstrations of September 27th. The urgent, 24-hour-notice character of the mobilizations seemed a trifle artificial given that the occasion was a fourth annual non-event -- the seating of Pol Pot's U.N. delegate.

The issue of who gets Cambodia's U.N. seat struck us as a peculiar focus for an emergency demonstration by a Trotskyist organization. Presumably the demonstrations had this as their focus in lieu of any immediate concrete incident to focus a Soviet/Vietnamese defensist rally around. (We presume that you considered the possibility of holding rallies around the vastly more important 007 spy-flight issue.)

What concerns us about the demonstrations were the political slogans raised (and omitted). You claim that "Pol Pot Killed Real Khymer Communists." Perhaps you would care to name one? We presume you refer to the Stalinist Khymer cadres aligned with Ho Chi Minh's Vietnamese Communist Party. They were indeed among the first to be liquidated by the then-Stalinists, now pro-imperialists, of the Pol Pot gang. But they were no more "real communists" than were Liu Shao-chi's followers in the Chinese Communist Party during the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution." They were simply victims of a vicious intra-Stalinist purge.

Rather than create real communists (i.e., Trotskyists), Ho Chi Minh murdered several thousand of them. This was necessary to insure that the proletariat did

not become a contender for power in Vietnam. In 1945-46 and again in 1954, the Stalinists, led by "Uncle Ho," actively sold out the Vietnamese revolution in a futile attempt to achieve "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism. This treachery prolonged the struggle for two decades and directly resulted in millions of unnecessary deaths and untold suffering for the Vietnamese working people.

You "hail" the Stalinist reconstruction of Kampuchea. This is simply not Trotskyist. Heng Samrin's economic planning could conceivably lay the basis for the development of a Cambodian proletariat. Already his Vietnamese-backed regime has recorded significant progress in reversing the barbarous policies of Pol Pot which laid waste the foundations of Cambodian culture and economic life. Trotsky made a careful and balanced assessment of the historic accomplishments of Stalin's five year plans (which, among other things, contributed enormously to the USSR's ability to defend itself against Nazi imperialism) -- but he didn't "hail" them. Nor did the Trotskyists "hail" the important economic gains which resulted from the Chinese and Cuban revolutions. To our knowledge this is the first time the iSt has "hailed" Stalinist economic planning anywhere on the planet. What has changed?

The flip side of the flattering description of the political character of the pro-Vietnamese wing of the Khymer Rouge (and, by implication, its mentor the VCP) and the hosannas for their economic accomplishments was the deliberate decision not to raise the call for political revolution in the deformed workers states of Indochina at the 27 September demonstrations. Of course, there is a certain logic to this omission. If the Stalinist VCP creates "real Communist cadres," if its economic planning should be "hailed," then it is perfectly understandable why the call for political revolution is no longer appropriate. If that's the case, then there's not much left for Trotskyists to do but help out a bit around the edges -- campaigning for U.N. seats and undertaking other odd jobs that the Stalinists are too busy, or too cowardly, to do.

For our part we uphold the historic position of our movement against the revisionism exhibited on 27 September:

"The SL has always called for unconditional defense of the DRV/NLF in their struggle against imperialism and for a military victory to the NLF in the South. In the civil war going on in Vietnam it is an elementary act of class solidarity to take sides. But we totally oppose any coalition government, or the slogan of "neutral" Vietnam. All Indochina Must Go Communist! And we give no political support to the treacherous Stalinist bureaucracy. These parasitic misleaders put down by torture and murder the Vietnamese revolutionary militants -- in the first place the Trotskyists -- who fought from the outset in 1945 against the re-imposition of imperialism and for a socialist revolution. Should all of Indochina pass out of imperialist control it will be no thanks to Ho Chi Minh and his successors. Before the laboring masses in Vietnam can obtain even the beginnings of satisfaction of their elementary needs and hopes, a political revolution will be necessary, through revolutionary proletarian struggles, led by a Leninist, i.e., Trotskyist, party of permanent revolution." (emphasis in original)

-- SL PB Statement, printed in WV No. 16, 16 February 1973

With the Spartacist League now hailing Heng Samrin's economic planning, no wonder the call for political revolution is treated as so much excess baggage.

In an article which first appeared in WV No. 21, appropriately entitled "Those Who Revile Our History," it is noted that:

"...Ho Chi Minh's policies of vacillation and betrayal were in direct counterposition to revolutionary Trotskyism and in fact required the massacre of thousands of supporters of the Fourth International.

"...for the Pabloists there is not only no need to be a Trotskyist in Vietnam, since the North Vietnamese and NLF leadership has absorbed the lessons of the permanent revolution; but in addition, the ideological conflict between Stalinism and Trotskyism in Vietnam was entirely unnecessary, since there was a little bit of truth on both sides. The murders? Just an unfortunate mistake."

On a recent Grenada demonstration in Toronto (29 October) the comrades of the TLC began to chant "Vietnam Was a Victory — Two, Three, Many Vietnams!" External Tendency supporters marching with them counterposed "Vietnam was a Victory -- Two, Three, Many Defeats for Imperialism!" The TLers implicitly accepted our correction. But by resuscitating Che Guevara's call they are only carrying out the political logic of the 27 September demonstrations. ("Two, Three, Many Deformed Workers States!") Is the membership politically disoriented on this question, or are they simply anticipating the leadership's next step?

Doubtless some will object that things are different in the "Reagan years." We have already heard from some iSt members in Canada that advocacy of political revolution is a sure sign of creeping Shachtmanism. This is a familiar refrain. For years the Stalinists have baited Trotskyists as "counter-revolutionaries" because they called for proletarian political revolution against the bureaucratic parasites. In his August letter to us defending the Yuri Andropov Brigade, comrade Robertson asserted that for him the question of political revolution is "inextricable from the unconditional military defense" of the deformed and degenerated workers states. But it was clearly "extricated" from the iSt's September 27th propaganda pickets in defense of Vietnam and the Soviet Union.

Last April in Sydney, the SL/ANZ called a demonstration to protest the Chinese shelling of Vietnam. Among the many signs defending Vietnam and the Soviet Union, were placards which proclaimed "Stalinism Undermines the Workers States" and "For Workers Political Revolution from Peking to Moscow to Hanoi!" Good, solid, orthodox Trotskyism. What's changed since April? Did the fourth annual seating of Ieng Sary signify the beginning of a "New World Reality" in the minds of the leadership of the iSt? We hope not, but the September demonstrations do represent a disturbing political departure from the Trotskyist program which the iSt has historically upheld.

In the years which followed the Second World War, discouraged by the abortion of proletarian revolution in France and Italy, possessing virtually no influence in the European working class and rightfully alarmed at the aggressive military posture adopted by U.S. imperialism, the Pabloites developed their War/Revolution thesis and their position on centuries of deformed workers states. This was used to justify deep entry into the Stalinist parties and to abandon in practice the call for political revolution. Today the immediate prospects for proletarian revolution in the advanced capitalist world, particularly in North America, are not bright. The SL is moving decisively away from the struggle to lead the proletariat organized in the U.S. unions. The Reagan administration is clearly mobilizing for a nuclear World War III against the Soviet Union. More than the "Yuri Andropov Brigade" the political shift indicated by the slogans for the demonstrations for Heng Samrin's U.N. seat give us uncomfortable intimations of *deja vu*.

Bolshevik greetings,
External Tendency of the iSt

