



Marxism vs. Social-Patriotism

In October 1983, when the US Marine barracks in Beirut was blown up, the Spartacist League/US immediately called for saving the survivors. The External Tendency of the iSt labeled this as social-patriotic cowardice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface..... i

"A Loss of Nerve and a Loss of Will"
- ET Bulletin No. 2, January 1984..... 1

Front page of Workers Vanguard No. 341, 6 November 1983..... 4

"Imperialist War, the Armed Forces and Revolution"
- Young Spartacus No. 113, November 1983..... 5

"Reuben's Tangled Web"
- ET Bulletin No. 2, January 1984..... 7

"Marxism and Bloodthirstiness"
- Workers Vanguard No. 345, 6 January 1984..... 12

"Marxism and Social-Patriotism"
- ET Bulletin No. 3, May 1984..... 17

"British Sailors and American Marines"
- ET Bulletin No. 3, May 1984..... 21

"Black Marine: I Won't Go!"
- Workers Vanguard No. 355, 25 May 1984..... 22

Exchange on Corporal Griffin

- Letter from ET to SL, 5 July 1984..... 24

- SL Reply, Workers Vanguard No. 360, 3 August 1984..... 25

- ET Rejoinder, 21 September 1984..... 27

Preface

This pamphlet documents the political struggle between the External Tendency of the international Spartacist tendency (ET) and the leadership of the Spartacist League/U.S. (SL) over the Leninist position on the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in October 1983. The initial response of the SL was to call for "Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive!" (see Workers Vanguard front page reprinted on page 4). An ET statement condemned this slogan as a "cowardly, social-patriotic" betrayal of Trotskyism and counterposed the demand for "Imperialists Out of Lebanon -- By Any Means Necessary!" This was followed by a series of polemics which constitute the contents of this bulletin.

The sudden concern for the well-being of the Marines, who only a year earlier Workers Vanguard had described as among "the world's most notorious imperialist butchers," marked a radical departure from the SL's formal posture as the continuators of orthodox Trotskyism. It illuminated starkly the programmatic dimension to the SL's evolution from Leninism to political banditry -- a peculiar and eclectic form of centrism, chiefly characterized by a capacity for wild and capricious programmatic gyrations. The SL's degeneration is rooted, in the final analysis, in a loss of confidence in the possibility of winning the working class to the revolutionary program, however it is overlaid by a substantial element of leader-cultism. Indulging the fancies and fantasies of James Robertson has become an increasingly important determinant of the real activity of the group in its decline.

Political bandits are always willing to subordinate questions of formal political line to the exigencies of their perceived immediate organizational requirements. The cowardly reflex exhibited by the SL leadership over the Marines in Lebanon was clearly motivated by fear of incurring the displeasure of their own ruling class. For Robertson, it is apparently more important to safeguard his privileged position, the groupies and the extravagant personal lifestyle which he affords himself as the big frog in the little pond of the Spartacist League than his claim to represent the continuity of Trotskyism.

The "Marines Alive" position quickly became a kind of loyalty test for the SL membership -- particularly as it became clear that elements of the cadre preferred the "old" position of blanket opposition to imperialist intervention in the semi-colonial world. Henceforth all those SL members who were truly loyal to their infallible leadership (i.e., all those who wished to retain their membership) were required to show enthusiasm for saving the lives of the surviving colonial gendarmes in Lebanon.

As we noted in a letter of 7 February 1984, what made this position so important for the trajectory of the iSt was that it was "not the result of disorientation due to some new historical development. It was a conscious and deliberate adaptation to the American ruling class." The aggressive political intervention of the External Tendency on this question at least ensured that the SL's passage into revisionism did not go unchallenged.

-- December 1984

ET Statement of 12 November 1983

"A Loss of Nerve and a Loss of Will"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The Main Enemy Is At Home, Sometimes"

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

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

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

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

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

"Without luck -- I will put it this way -- we can quickly get into a spot just like we were in Vietnam mighty easy.

...The real concern and meaning to our people is that, by and large, they are the ones that are going to have to put up the boys and the blood and the members of their families to fight a war if we get into it now or later."

Bad politics gives you some pretty bad bedfellows. Not only has WV taken up the slogans of a wing of the capitalist class, but it scandalously refuses to defend the anti-imperialist attacks. For Robertson et al: "The main enemy is at home, sometimes." In "Facing the Reagan Years," the observation was made that:

"We're expecting a rotten time with Reagan and the social climate in the country. So you're going to see political dives...We're going to see some other stuff too, mainly a loss of nerve and a loss of will."

(Workers Vanguard, No.273, 30 January 1981)

Well we're seeing it. And in the SL/US it's starting at the top.

The flinching over the Soviet's bringing down the KAL 007 spy plane (WV No.337 said that if the Soviets knew it was a passenger plane, then shooting it down would have been "worse than a barbaric atrocity," "despite the potential military damage of such an apparent spying mission") showed the erosion of revolutionary determination in the leadership of the SL. And now it's "save the Marines!"

The U.S. Marines and the French Legionnaires are the same outfits that lost big in Indochina. And we want to see them lose again in Lebanon. "Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive" is the most shockingly rightist betrayal of Trotskyism yet from the Robertson clique. Any iSt member with an ounce of proletarian class instinct should be disgusted by it. Those who adhere to the Trotskyist program must stand up and fight the leadership's social-patriotic drift. The precious cadre of the iSt must be saved for Trotskyism! It is desperately necessary to fight for Trotskyism, now, in the iSt!

"Imperialists Out of Lebanon -- By Any Means Necessary!"

Rape of Grenada

Sherbell/Picture Group



Dougherty/Camera 5

Big Stick invasion of Grenada (left) can't hide Reagan's Beirut bombing disaster, which killed more than 230 (right).

Bloody Mess in Lebanon

NOVEMBER 1—Finally they thought they found a country small enough for Reagan's supercommandos to cream. Ronald Reagan had to divert attention quickly from the Beirut bombing that wiped out Marine headquarters in Lebanon, killing more than 230 U.S. troops. "We need a win," kept insisting election-minded White House advisers. Invading tiny Grenada, only twice the area of Washington, D.C. with a population no larger than a couple of Harlem housing projects, appealed to the Pentagon because it was "do-able." But five days after the leathernecks stormed the white sand beaches of this Caribbean island, the "can do" generals and admirals still couldn't seem to do it. With 1,900 Marines, several units of Rangers, more than 5,000 paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne and a war fleet of 20 ships, they managed to seize two airports and the town of St. George's. They said it could take weeks to clean out Cubans holed up in the hills. The Yankee shark will succeed in swallowing the Caribbean sardine, of course. But after all the flag waving has died down, not even the unprecedented press censorship can turn the Grenada invasion into a great U.S. victory in its anti-Soviet war drive.

Reagan is in big trouble over Lebanon—big enough to be the undoing of his administration. Those body bags being flown into Dover Air Force Base should be stacked up in the White House. Things got so bad last week that

We Salute Heroic Cuban Fighters

We reprint below a communiqué by the Cuban government broadcast over Radio Havana at 4 p.m., Wednesday, October 26.

"The people were informed that at approximately 0700 hours communications between the Cuban embassy in Grenada and the Cuban defensive positions were cut off.

"It was not possible to receive any more information on the course of the latest fighting and the individual fate of each one of the comrades defending their positions.

they stopped announcing the number of dead and began announcing the survivors. It was the largest number of U.S. troops killed on a single day since the height of the Tet offensive in Vietnam. And the immediate reaction of Marine families was to see their sons as victims rather than heroes: "It almost seems like

"We can only tell you that at 0955 hours the Cuban embassy in Grenada reported that the latest enemy attack on our positions was carried out using all available means: fighter aircraft, helicopters, heavy and medium calibre artillery and mortars. But at the end, a group of six comrades, fighting our flag, continued fighting.

"At 1117 hours our ambassador communicated that there is no further Cuban resistance. The fighters in the final redoubt did not surrender and gave their lives for the homeland."

Vietnam again.... Those poor boys dying, and I'm sure they don't know what they're dying for."

"Go in or get out" was a cry heard particularly from the military, which has been more than a little gun-shy over Central America—wary of another unwinnable war without public support.

Even conservative hawks like Georgia senator Sam Nunn were for a phased withdrawal from "Mission Impossible." And Marines interviewed in Beirut wanted out, now, alive. We can support that.

In this particular deal America has been manipulated into becoming Israel's cat's paw. Pointing to Israel's withdrawal, Sam Nunn argued:

"Lebanon is surely no more vital to our interests than to those of Israel, yet Israel has recognized that its soldiers' lives should not be risked further in the cauldron of Lebanon's factional strife."

Given the comparative populations, if the 230-plus dead in the October 23 blast had been Israelis, it would be the equivalent of 23 thousand American soldiers killed. And with the Zionist "master race" psychology which equates one dead Israeli with 100 Arabs, the country would have exploded. So Israel's terrorist generals and terrorist cabinet ministers are openly laughing themselves silly. They did it smart: swearing they wouldn't leave Lebanon, dragging in the Americans to cover them when they got trapped in Beirut and then precipitously withdrawing, leaving the U.S. holding the bag. (And at least the Israelis do know how to protect a military compound... or how to blow one up—witness the Zionists' 1946 attack on British HQ in Jerusalem's King David Hotel.)

As the shock hit America last Sunday, continued on page 10

**Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive!
U.S. Out of Grenada, Dead or Alive!**

On the Slogan "Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive!"

Imperialist War, the Armed Forces and Revolution

We reprint below edited excerpts of a presentation given by comrade Reuben Samuels to the New York Spartacist League, November 6, on the U.S. intervention in Lebanon and invasion of Grenada. Reagan first sent the Marines into Lebanon in the late summer of 1982, at the request of Yasir Arafat among others, in order to disarm and expel the armed forces of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The imperialist "peacekeepers" thus set up the massacre of defenseless Palestinians at the Shatila/Sabra camps by the Israeli-organized Phalange fascists. At the time much of the U.S. reformist left, notably Sam Marcy's Workers World Party and Jack Barnes' Socialist Workers Party (SWP) *supported* the U.S. military intervention in the name of "saving lives."

These groups are notorious for their uncritical tailing of anti-proletarian, petty-bourgeois nationalist forces. In the 1975-76 Lebanese civil war when a potential social explosion of the oppressed and downtrodden Muslim masses was channeled by their feudalist leaders into an inter-communalist bloodletting, Workers World and the SWP were vocal cheerleaders for the Muslim clan chiefs who were no less brutal and unsavory than the Maronite rightists. From the standpoint of the toiling masses, all sides were reactionary.

Today these fake-leftists look to the Lebanese Muslim Druze and Shi'ite groups which have become an appendage of the Assad regime of Syria, which intervened in the civil war in favor of the Christian Maronite Phalange! None of the treacherous forces in the current Lebanese imbroglio are fighting U.S. imperialism. However, a U.S./Israeli attack on Syria could easily escalate into a war against the Soviet Union. Should this happen, revolutionaries must give unconditional military defense to the Soviet Union.

One can see in the conditions of war those things which hasten the day of self-emancipation of the proletariat, those conditions which are indeed

revolutionary. One aspect of our attitude towards the Vietnam War, as well as the many wars that Reagan is fighting, is that the more bogged down U.S. imperialism gets in these various colonial and anti-Soviet adventures and confrontations, it's a good thing, even though—and this is dialectical—we demand the U.S. get out everywhere. We want to see U.S. imperialism hemorrhage. This provides a certain breathing space for social struggle elsewhere as well as generating the conditions of social struggle within the United States itself.

In the Vietnam War we supported the demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of American troops. *But not by itself.* Because we were not only for the defeat of our own imperialist bourgeoisie in Vietnam, we also supported the *other side* which was the side of a social revolution as well as a struggle against colonial subjugation which had been going on for decades. We realized that U.S. imperialism could not be decisively defeated in Vietnam unless that social revolution was victorious and consolidated. So these demands were *interrelated*, the demand for the U.S. to get its troops out and victory for the social revolution in Vietnam.

The Socialist Workers Party attempted to tailor its propaganda to the worst sorts of social patriotism—"Bring Our Boys Home." Well, our boys in Vietnam were the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese army. There were a number of ways that the American boys could have been brought home. They could be withdrawn or they could be brought back in body bags. The important thing was that the U.S. get out and the other side win.

Now, why is our current line in Lebanon not the same as in the Vietnam War? If there was any side that was fighting the Marines, we could give them military support. The problem is there's *no side* that's fighting the Marines. The side that was most likely to, whose cause is clearest, the Palestine Liberation Organization, saw the Ma-

rines as their principal protectors and invited them into Lebanon in the first place. All of the other forces in Lebanon are simply jockeying for position with the other imperialists in the region.

We were the *only* force on the left, you will recall, to be outspoken from the very beginning in opposing U.S. intervention in Lebanon. But now that they're there and are getting bogged down, we also realize the contradictions that causes for this government. This blowing up the Marines headquarters came after there had been a great deal of disgruntlement towards Reagan's policies in Lebanon, which we have exploited jocularly with headlines like "U.S. Up Lebanese Creek."

When the Marines were blown away and the headquarters was blown away, from Camp Lejeune throughout wide sections of American society the American people were driven into an anti-government frenzy and outrage over the policies of the Reagan administration. Basically they saw the blood of Beirut on Reagan's hands. This was the initial reaction in the interviews with these Marines, their families, in polls that were taken: that this is a senseless, stupid, destructive waste and that the culprit is in the White House. Well, we weren't indifferent to this. We tried to find a slogan, "Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive!", which addressed this widespread sentiment, which was pacifistic, which certainly had an element of patriotism, and to exploit this contradiction between the people and the government pursuing a war policy which in this particular conjuncture looked extremely stupid and criminal.

Of course, the U.S. has gone into Lebanon as part of Reagan's general anti-Soviet war drive. So we have raised a *number* of slogans over both Lebanon and Grenada, including the defense of Russia and Cuba. These slogans must be seen as *interlinked*.

The point is to take the pacifism of the masses and direct it against its own government, to make the masses recognize in their government their own enemy. If there is to be peace, then that government must be replaced with a government of the working people. Over Lebanon we were a couple of steps down that road. Because over Lebanon a lot of people saw Reagan as the *main enemy* for a moment.

Now, you get the argument that the Marines are the baddest, they're the worstest, they're the personification of evil. Well, in Grenada that's true. And

that's why we have another slogan, "U.S. Out of Grenada, Dead or Alive!" There's a UPI dispatch that a number of Cuban war prisoners sent back to Cuba have gangrene because of untended war wounds. The Marines in Lebanon are the same guys as in Grenada, but they're not fighting at the moment.

Here's the thing about the Marines that was very evident in Vietnam. The Marines are the vanguard units of combat, and so they're the people who get the most shot up. Therefore to join the Marines very often involves a certain element of machismo, patriotism and all that. But also once you get over there, the contradiction between what it's about and what's happening to you is the sharpest. And very often those guys come back as the angriest. One of the most important developments in the antiwar movement in the armed forces were Marines who came back from Vietnam to Camp Lejeune and organized around a newspaper called *Head On*.

The armed forces, that is, the core of the state, is an armed body of men, separated from the population as a whole, which defends certain class relations. But there are gradations of how much an armed force can be separated from the population depending on the degree of military mobilization. If a country is going to war, it may need to mobilize substantial sections of the population. And the amount of separation, even with uniforms and barracks and barbed wire, begins to break down. When you have mass conscription it brings into the armed forces elements from all sections of society.

We make a class distinction between the rank-and-file soldier and the cadre, the professional soldier, the officer corps. The officers are basically going to devote their lives to the armed forces. The enlisted man is going to go back after a few years of service into the general population and has not severed his links, in that sense, with the rest of the population. Our policy in terms of the armed forces is to exploit this class differentiation between the enlisted men and the officer corps, between the enlisted men and the elite units, the killer squads like the Special Forces.

The question is, how do you get the power? We have our newspaper and the links with the mass organizations of the proletariat; and they have all the guns and the tanks and the air force. That is why all the talk about violence coming

from a Marxist organization is completely absurd. The violence comes from the ruling class. The road to power is through the demoralization of that ruling class, the polarization of the armed forces in which, in the main, the soldiers either join the revolution or step aside. And the bourgeoisie are left without troops to defend their positions of power. Otherwise you don't have a revolution.

There's a nice joke from the Vietnam War days that sort of captures this. And it also captured what was happening to the United States. This was almost becoming true. There was an antiwar demonstration at the White House, and it was very noisy and boisterous and large. Nixon's wife was looking out of the window. So Nixon says: "So there's an antiwar demonstration out there, huh? And it's getting closer to the White House? Okay, call in the 82nd Airborne." And Pat says: "It is the 82nd Airborne." ■

Young Spartacus

No. 113

November 1983

On the Slogan "Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive"

Reuben's Tangled Web

"O what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive!"

The key to understanding Reuben Samuels' convoluted article "Imperialist War, the Armed Forces and Revolution" (Young Spartacus No. 113, November 1983) in defense of the "Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive!" slogan is to recognize that it is deliberately intended to obfuscate, not to clarify, the question. It is literally crammed with distortions, false assertions, inaccuracies and faulty logic.

Let's take a look at some of the strands of Reuben's tangled web.

(1) The article begins with a restatement of the standard Leninist attitude toward imperialist military adventures: defeats for "our" imperialists are, in general, a good thing. Cde. Samuels then devotes several paragraphs to the differences between the American intervention in Lebanon and Vietnam. Yet, as we pointed out in our statement of 12 November, the British intervention in Ireland is a far closer analogy. As the resident expert on the question of

interpenetrated peoples, Reuben knows this full well. The reason that the SL does not take up the Ireland analogy is that it would expose the political implications of the "Marines Alive" demand. Imagine the SL/B marching on a Bobby Sands demonstration with the demand "British Troops Out of Ireland, Now, Alive!"

Revolutionists oppose U.S. (or any) imperialist intervention in any "third world" country regardless of the nature of the domestic political/military forces. When the imperialists threatened to intervene in Uganda, WV correctly called for "Hands Off Uganda!" This no more implied any kind of military support to Idi Amin than the call for "U.S. Out of Lebanon, Now" implies support to Jumblatt. If the U.S. intervened in Iran tomorrow, Trotskyists would have a side. We would militarily support Khomeni's reactionary "Revolutionary Guards" against the American invaders.

The corollary of this position is that we defend any military actions by the oppressed aimed at the imperialist presence, regardless of the political character of those who launch them. This does not imply any kind of political support to the forces which carry out such attacks. Again the example of Ireland is pertinent. The iSt has historically defended only those actions of the Provisional IRA which are directed against the imperialist "peacekeepers." It has condemned as criminal sectarianism Provo attacks on the Protestant civilian population. And the Spartacist tendency has never called for the military victory of the Provos over the Protestants in Northern Ireland. There is no legitimate reason for revolutionaries to take a different position on Lebanon.

(2) As for his incredibly nonsensical assertion that in Lebanon today "there's no side that's fighting the Marines," we wonder how cde. Samuels accounts for the demolition of their headquarters? Who fired the shell that killed eight more of Reagan's stormtroopers on December 4? Why has the U.S. Air Force and Navy been retaliating against the Syrians and the various Muslim militias and hapless villagers in the Shuf mountains for the losses that the Marines have suffered to date? Facts can be stubborn things and the fact is that Reagan's imperialist "peacekeepers" are in Lebanon to prop up Gemayel's "government" and everyone knows it. This has naturally brought them into conflict with Gemayel's domestic opposition (which is currently aligned with Syria). Hence a lot of the Muslim population of Lebanon would like to drive the Marines (and the French and Israelis) out. Ergo the attack on the Marine headquarters and on the French paratroopers. (The latter have been strangely absent from the coverage in WV and YSp. Is the lack of concern for their safety and well-being perhaps because they are not Americans? We look forward to the next issue of Le Bolchevik.)

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

"Frenzy" on Warren Street

(3) The core of Samuels' presentation is the argument that the social-patriotic demand to save the Marines was a "smart" maneuver. But to prove this, he must first attempt to establish that the domestic political situation in the U.S. was so turbulent in the aftermath of the bombing that the question of state power was

placed on the agenda. He asserts that "the American people were driven into an anti-government frenzy and outrage." Proof of this "frenzy?" According to the SL one could see it in a few "interviews with Marines, their families, [and] in polls that were taken." That's all! Of course, the surviving Marines and their families are worried about their skins. As for the dip in Reagan's ratings in the polls, well, losing military ventures are never popular. (The converse is also true -- as Reagan's rebound in the wake of the Grenada invasion demonstrated.)

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

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

It is true that in the event of a massive proletarian upsurge, some elements of the Marine Corps might well be open to revolutionary propaganda -- but to orient to them today is worse than a stupidity. In the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, the bulk of the police force went over to the strikers. Should we therefore change our attitude toward the cops? Of course not. The cops are the relatively lightly armed bodies of men who are trained and paid to protect capitalist property at home. The Marines are more heavily armed colonial troops chiefly used to protect American capitalist property overseas. With the regular army they also constitute the capitalists' last line of defense against the working class domestically. (In 1967, for example, the 82nd Airborne was dispatched to Detroit to impose martial law in the ghetto.) Neither Marines nor cops are part of the working class -- a point which Samuels attempts to get around with all his talk about the "links" they retain to their plebian origins. Both are the sworn enemies of the workers and the oppressed.

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

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

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

Who Are the Marines?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And how to get promoted?

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

-- Michael Wright, op.cit.

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

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

Marxism and Bloodthirstiness

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

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

When over 240 U.S. Marines were blown to pieces at the Beirut airport compound in October, the largest

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

We are for the victory of just causes. Necessarily and above all, the centrality of just causes is the shattering of the

exploiting and oppressing classes and the victory of socialism. We are socialists not least because we are passionately opposed to war, the gathering together of large numbers of young workingmen to be slaughtered in the interests of the rulers. In this savagely class-divided world, dominated by the mass murderers of My Lai, the struggle for the victory of just causes will have a big physical component. We must stand therefore for the maximum assembling of effective force on the just side, hopefully to demoralize and deter the forces of reaction so that the actual casualties are minimized.

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

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

the Zionists, they made a separate ceasefire with the Israelis early in the 1982 invasion, leaving the Palestinians to fight alone.

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

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

A very different situation obtains in Grenada, Reagan's diversion from the Lebanon disaster. We viewed the U.S. invasion of Grenada in terms comparable to the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon: racist atrocities against another nationality. We had a side in 1982: the defense of the Palestinians against the attempt to wipe them out. And we had a side in Grenada: with the 700 Cuban construction workers who resisted the Yankee invaders. It took 6,000 U.S. troops to "take" Grenada in the face of the Cubans' heroic self-defense, and most of the Cubans were over 40 years old! The same issue of *Workers Vanguard* which our critics believe marks our decisive capitulation to "social-patriotism" hailed the Cuban fighters who—unlike anyone in Lebanon today—fought the main enemy, U.S. imperialism. In Grenada, we had a side, and our call was "U.S. Out, Dead or Alive!"

And in Vietnam! The side of justice there was unambiguously that of the National Liberation Front (NLF)/North Vietnamese forces against U.S. imperialism. At stake were the national

rights of the Vietnamese people and the social revolution whose victory was the only way to definitively drive out colonialism. Our call for "Victory to the Vietnamese Revolution!" was not bloodymindedness but a recognition of what was necessary to bring peace to Vietnam after three decades of imperialist war. In Lebanon, it is precisely the question of social revolution, or even national liberation, that is missing.

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

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

antiwar youth if drafted should seek to educate their class brothers in the army about the imperialist character of the war and their own interest in opposing it.

The global conflict between the antiquated imperialist order and the emancipation of the proletariat does not reduce itself to a division between "good" and "bad" peoples. In battles between just and unjust causes, Marxists have a side but nevertheless do not propose as our program the extermination of all those sent to fight for the wrong side (a program which, if carried out, would long ago have done away with the proletariat of most of the Western capitalist nations). In wars where no side represents an advance for elementary justice, we stand for revolutionary defeatism on both sides. Consider, in addition to Lebanon, the Iran-Iraq war. Is it "social-patriotic" to advise the Iranian and Iraqi troops not to slaughter each other for their respective regimes, to turn the guns around and go home? The squalid Falklands/Malvinas war was another such case. Neither the Argentine nor the British working masses had anything to gain from the victory of their "own" murderous rulers in the Falklands; they only stood to lose their lives. (In fact, Argentina's defeat led straight to the downfall of the military regime; Britain's victory led to the re-election of Margaret Thatcher.) Those who want bloodthirstiness must look to Thatcher, who ordered the gratuitous sinking of the Argentine cruiser *Belgrano*, taking the lives of more than 320 young men in the icy waters of the South Atlantic.

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

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

—*The ABC of Communism*

Or as Rosa Luxemburg put it in her

Junius Pamphlet (1916):

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

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

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

While the bourgeoisie can only maintain its rule over the laboring majority through the massive use of intimidation, force and violence, for Marxists violence is a necessary *evil*—one imposed upon the defense of the struggle for socialism by the bloody-mindedness of the exploiting class in power. After the Cuban people defeated the CIA's Bay of Pigs invaders, the Castro regime traded the captured *gusanos* for needed medical supplies. In El Salvador, the leftist insurgents have followed a policy of turning captured enemy soldiers over to the Red Cross unharmed—an effective incentive to mass desertion from the junta's army. Contrast this with the fascistic death squads who operate against the populace under the principle of "the only

good one is a dead one." The principal weapon in the proletariat's arsenal is not force *per se*, but the ability to undermine the capitalist regiments by appealing to common class interests. Even in defense of just causes, Marxists are guided by a rational calculus and not by bloodlust.

There are situations in which insufficient force used initially leads to greater bloodshed ultimately. Had the Nicaraguan Sandinistas beheaded the counterrevolutionary pro-*Somocista* organizations, e.g., by trials of Somoza's torturers by revolutionary tribunals, the Nicaraguan masses today would not be forced to fight and die against the *contra* invaders. We raise the slogan "Kill the Invaders!" not because we want to see a lot of dead bodies lying around, but because if every little band the CIA sends over is wiped out, and the counterrevolutionary capitalist "fifth column" in Nicaragua is expropriated as a class and its power broken, bloodshed will be minimized, while conciliation strengthens the hand of the U.S.-backed *contras* who aim to drown in blood the possibility of socialist revolutionary development in Nicaragua.

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

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

Marxists do not support nor advocate the killing of innocent civilians—be it on board KAL 007, an Israeli bus in Jerusalem, a pub in Northern Ireland. With KAL, the fact is that the Soviets did not knowingly down a civilian passenger jet. Had they done so, we said, it would have been worse than a barbaric atrocity, it would have been an idiocy worthy of the Israelis. This seemingly uncontentious position against wanton bloodshed provoked

charges of "softness" from critics whose vicarious bloodthirstiness tends to be directly proportional to the distance from their own appetites. From a safe distance, the petty-bourgeois radicals embrace the "good" peoples (if necessary first inventing them, as in Lebanon today) and for the "bad," well, the only good one is a dead one. Reactionary in itself, such an attitude—completely divorced as it is from Marxist class analysis—necessarily gives way to anti-communist public opinion. Thus we see many of yesterday's "radicals" joining up ideologically with U.S. imperialism over the plight of "poor little Afghanistan" and the crushing of counterrevolutionary Polish Solidarność. (In Afghanistan, the "freedom fighters" are fanatical Islamic defenders of the bride price, while the "evil superpower" defends the rights of the Afghan people to emerge from the ninth century, including the right of women to learn to read. In Poland, "underdog" Lech Walesa and Solidarność represent the Vatican, Western bankers and the CIA in league against the Polish Stalinist bureaucracy, threatening a bloody return to capitalist "democracy," i.e., wage slavery and NATO missiles.)

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

Today there are a half a million young men in the Bundeswehr (West German army) and, as in the past, they are likely to be sent off to fight for unjust causes. We would work for their defeat, but that does not mean that we propose the extermination of every German worker in uniform. We seek rather the bursting asunder *from within*, i.e., from below, of the imperialist armed forces as part of

the struggle to realize comrade Lenin's profoundly humanist view of the "socialist system of society, which, by abolishing the division of mankind into classes, by abolishing all exploitation of man by man, and of one nation by other nations, will inevitably abolish all possibility of war." ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

No. 345

6 January 1984

Reply to WV

Marxism and Social-Patriotism

February 7, 1984

Dear Comrades:

"Marxism and Bloodthirstiness" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 345, 6 January), written in response to our 12 November critique of your social-patriotic call for "Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive!," tends to confirm rather than refute our analysis. As in your other recent material on Lebanon, while you've got lots to say about the "young men" of the U.S. Marines, you evince remarkably little sympathy for the Muslim villagers killed, maimed and terrorized by the Marines and their naval flotilla. These are the real victims of American intervention in Lebanon -- along with the victims of Sabra and Shatila -- not the occupants of the 240 aluminum caskets you seem so worried about.

You assert that you "can only despise those who call for the death of American soldiers for the crimes of their rulers." We find it peculiar, to say the least, that all your loathing and spite are reserved for a handful of "bloodthirsty" ex-new left accountants (as well, of course, as your Bolshevik critics). You neglect to indicate any such antipathy for Reagan's trained killers in the Marine Corps. For our part, we despise those whose kneejerk reaction in the aftermath of the decade's worst military setback for "their" imperialists is to call for saving the lives of the survivors.

We note that you consider our critique of "Marines Alive" to be too dangerous to give us credit for. Instead, we are referred to vaguely as "those among our readership who...denounced our Lebanon slogan as ...'social-patriotic'." It seems a trifle timid. But then perhaps you don't want to advertise our adherence to Leninism in the face of your quavering.

What we object to far more than our sudden anonymity, is the deliberate *falsification* of our position. We raised two slogans in contrast to your social-patriotic call for "Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive!" They were: "Imperialists Out of Lebanon -- By Any Means Necessary!" and, perhaps more evocatively, "U.S. Marines: Live Like Pigs -- Die Like Pigs!" Neither of these slogans is the least bit "bloodthirsty" and both are solidly within the Trotskyist tradition. You implicitly recognize this in your counterfeit polemic when you falsely assert that we "counterpos[ed] the supposedly radical sentiment: 'the only good one is a dead one!'" But that is *not* our position and we did *not* counterpose it, as anyone who reads our statement can see. Your inability to deal with our real position gives rise to this dishonest and politically cowardly falsification. This is the method of political bankrupts.

Communists no more call for the death of every American marine in Lebanon than for every British soldier in Ireland. But when one speaks of

"defeat" of one side of a military conflict (i.e., Grenada, Vietnam), or where one supports the military blows aimed against imperialist troops intervening in colonial and semi-colonial countries (i.e., Northern Ireland, Lebanon), it is reasonable to assume that this will entail losses on the part of the imperialist armies. We call for U.S. Marines out of Lebanon, now, by any means necessary. We're not choosy if they go feet first or clamber back aboard their landing craft on their own -- as long as they go. To refer to this as "bloodlust" is simply social pacifism.

Labelling Reagan's Lebanon policy "stupid" and "senseless," you counter-
pose the presumably sensible call for getting the Marines out now before more are killed. As we pointed out in our 12 November statement, this position is by no means unique to the Spartacist League. "Senseless" is precisely the way that Reagan's Democratic critics in Congress perceive his intervention in Lebanon. "Senseless" from the point of view of the best interests of U.S. imperialism. They also want to be sensible and smart and get them out now, while they are still alive. Your position can only be seen as a deliberate adaptation to this pro-imperialist sentiment -- "critical patriotism."

In your reply to us, you make much of your claim to be "for the victory of just causes." Who isn't? The problem is that in life things are not always simply good or bad, just or unjust. The same forces which carry out criminal anti-working class acts one day, may very well turn their guns on the forces of an "evil empire" the next. And the Bolshevik attitude toward their actions will vary accordingly. The Provisional IRA, for example, are simultaneously for just causes (like driving British imperialism out of Ireland) and unjust causes (like driving the Protestants into the sea). Leninists distinguish between those acts which are defensible and those which are not.

You say that you do not have a side in the fight between the present configuration of backward, oppressed and politically reactionary semi-colonial Muslim peoples of Lebanon (who do not even constitute an independent state power) and the bodies of armed men of your "own" imperialist government. You even make an absurd equation between this conflict and the current war between Iraq and Iran. But there is no comparison. The Iraq/Iran war is between two more or less equally backward capitalist societies. A victory for either side could only be a setback for the international proletariat. Therefore the only principled position is one of revolutionary defeatism on both sides. But Lebanon is something else. In the battles there between the Muslim militias and the U.S. Marines *imperialism is the issue*.

The military struggle by the various muslim forces in Lebanon (including those linked to the reactionary governments of Syria and Iran) against the imperialist presence in their country is a just one. It is profoundly "just" that the imperialist garrisons stationed in and around Beirut are encountering military opposition from large sections of the population. (If the opposition to the imperialist presence originated in the Christian community, we would, of course, have the same attitude.) Leninists are not neutral in such conflicts.

You try to hide your social-patriotic neutrality behind a smokescreen of assertions (correct in themselves) that *none* of the Muslim factions are the least bit supportable in their squalid intercommunal feuds with each other and with the Christian population of Lebanon. But this does not at all preclude military support to those blows which they aim against

the imperialist presence. All your talk about "just causes" is deliberately intended to alibi your objectively pro-imperialist call for rescuing the surviving marines.

We think that is instructive to trace the evolution of the rationalizations you advance for this shameful position. In the November issue of *Young Spartacus*, cde. Samuels was proclaiming it to be a brilliant Leninist tactic enabling you to channel the alleged mass "frenzy" and to split the Marine Corps. Now it is presented as just the latest application of some longstanding Gandhian-Trotskyist tradition of reverence for life.

In your article on "Bloodthirstiness" you tell your readers that: "We do not gloat over...those dead young men [marines] many of whom were considered expendable in the first place because they were black." This statement is the rather bizarre product of the intersection of the SL leadership's cowardly attempt to deflect the wrath of outraged Reaganites and the organization's current black turn. A few comments are in order. In the first place, the Pentagon did not intend to expend *any* of its marines in the bombing of the Beirut headquarters. Secondly, let us remind you that revolutionaries no more regret the "loss" of Reagan's black hitmen than his white ones. Those who sign up to fight the dirty colonial wars of U.S. imperialism can expect to occasionally encounter some resistance from their would-be victims, and some will inevitably pay the price. "Live Like Pigs -- Die Like Pigs" is simply a description of the risks you run as one of Reagan's enforcers.

We emphatically reject the implication in "Marxism and Bloodthirstiness" that the Marines Corps is comparable to the West German army. The Bundeswehr is a draft army largely composed of "workers in uniform."

Militant Longshoreman on KAL 007

Reagan is driving whole-hog toward a nuclear war with the Soviet Union. The U.S. labor bureaucrats are falling right in line behind the anti-communist hysteria generated by Reagan's provocations toward the USSR. Our union in the past (1950 - Korean war - for example) stood almost alone at times, resisting anti-communist war hysteria. But when the 007 Korean passenger plane (spy plane) was shot down, President Herman flinched badly when he said in effect that the Soviet Union doesn't have the right (and the obligation) to defend its most important Far Eastern military bases from provocative incursions. Instead of condemning the Los Angeles Local 13 Longshore leadership which refused to work a Russian ship and instead of attacking Reagan for trying to precipitate World War III, Jimmy gave back-handed support to Reagan's anti-Soviet crusade painting the Soviet Union as a brutal, satanic, evil empire. To their credit, Canadian and Mexican longshoremen continued to work Russian ships.

We would remind Jimmy Herman that PATCO's kissing Reagan's ass didn't save the Air Controllers union from being smashed and its leaders from being jailed.

-- Militant Longshoreman No. 7, 5 January 1984

Those comrades of the Trotskistische Liga Deutschlands who are called up, serve their time in it like any other plebeian youth. But the Marines are different. No one has to be a Marine. Those who decide to become marines volunteer for service in one of the crack units of U.S. imperialism. Our advice to any marine, or any soldier (or even any cop) who doesn't like what he is forced to do, is to cross the class line to the side of the oppressed.

We covered the essential points on your flinch on the KAL flight in the second issue of our bulletin. We note here merely that the position advanced in "Marxism and Bloodthirstiness" subtly distorts the position that *WV* took at the time.

"With KAL, the fact is that the Soviets did not knowingly down a civilian passenger jet. Had they done so, we said, it would have been worse than a barbaric atrocity, it would have been an idiocy worthy of the Israelis."

This passage, which still echoes the anti-Soviet propaganda barrage, omits the following highly significant phrase: "*despite the potential military damage of such an apparent spying mission*" (*WV* No. 337, 9 September, our emphasis). This is not at all an "uncontentious position against wanton bloodshed" as you claim but rather, a deliberate retreat from the Trotskyist policy of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union. If, as *WV* said, you condemn the downing of a civilian airliner despite the potential military damage, then you are no longer unconditional Soviet defensists -- you are defensists on condition that no civilian airline passengers stand to be injured.

"Marxism and Bloodthirstiness" is both deceitful and fraudulent. The fact that the newspaper that has published so many fine and powerful polemical defenses of Trotskyism in the past can do no better than turn out this piece of low-grade hack-work in defense of "Marines Alive," should give thoughtful comrades of the *iSt* pause. Why are there no good Trotskyist arguments for the *SL*'s position? Why must the tendency's leading organ resort to willful distortion of the position it polemicalizes against? Why can't *WV* find a single applicable precedent for "Marines Alive" in the entire history of the Trotskyist movement?

The whole piece rather reminds us of the anti-*SL* polemics that the *SWP* wrote in the mid-1970s denouncing those who would call on the bourgeois state to outlaw the fascists. The fact that the *SL* didn't hold the position that the *SWP* attributed to it was of no interest to the hacks who churned out these bogus polemics -- they only hoped that their tracts succeeded in confusing the issue in the minds of their readers. It would seem that *WV* is following the *Militant's* inglorious example of how to deal with left critics. It's a bad method comrades -- far better to renounce your mistake than to follow its logic.

Robertson & Co. are scared. They are losing their nerve. They know that there is a good chance that things could get hot in the next few years. Perhaps they think that this dive will improve their chances of weathering any upcoming repression against the left. (There are doubtless few things that Reaganite witchhunters would find less endearing than leftists who are seen to be indifferent -- or worse -- to the fate of those 240 "young men" in Beirut.)

What makes this position so important is that it is not an accidental slip. It is not a result of disorientation due to some new historical

development. It is a conscious and deliberate adaptation to the American ruling class. This social-patriotic rot must be cut out of the iSt before it infects the entire cadre. That means a fight. Those who are loyal to the program of Trotskyism have a responsibility to join with the comrades of the External Tendency in the fight to defend the Leninist heritage of the iSt from the political degeneration of its historic leadership.

Bolshevik greetings,

External Tendency of the iSt

British Sailors and American Marines

Spartacist League/Britain

March 14, 1984

Dear Comrades:

As a member of a tendency which has recently submitted a reapplication to the iSt, I read with considerable interest A. Gilchrist's reapplication in *Spartacist Britain* No. 53 (December 1983/January 1984). I must say that I found Cde. Gilchrist's auto-critique on the Falklands war to be quite striking, particularly in light of some correspondence which we have been carrying on of late with the Spartacist League/US. Cde. Gilchrist stated that:

"What a nationally-limited stance becomes in this period was glaringly revealed in the position I took on the Falklands war.... The position of 'Withdraw the Fleet' was a position of *defending* the imperialist armed forces from destruction by another anti-Soviet military. The Falklands war tested every tendency on the British left in the clearest way, because war is the period of greatest nationalist pressures. This Bennite position was a clear capitulation to the 'socialist' chauvinism of the Labour Party..."

(Emphasis in the original)

But if calling for the British military to be withdrawn from the Falklands (without even stipulating that they should be brought out "alive") is a position of "*defending* the imperialist armed forces," then what is one to make of the SL/US' call for "Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive" after the famous truck-bombing last October? "'Socialist' chauvinism" seems, if anything, a bit mild.

Bolshevik greetings,

T. Riley
for the External Tendency of the iSt

Defend Corporal Griffin!

Black Marine: I Won't Go!

Refused to Go to Lebanon, Grenada

On May 15, a military judge at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina threw the book at U.S. Marine corporal Alfred Griffin. This black Marine was sentenced to four months at hard labor, reduction in rank to private, forfeiture of \$395 monthly pay for six months and a bad-conduct discharge. His "crime" in the eyes of the Marine Corps? Griffin, a Black Muslim, refused to go to Lebanon and Grenada to kill fellow Muslims and blacks. *This soldier has stood up to the Marine Corps.* The draconian sentence is an attempt to intimidate all soldiers, particularly blacks, in the imperialist U.S. military. The Spartacist League demands: "Drop the charges! Freedom for Corporal Griffin—Restore his rights!"

A machine-gun team leader and two-year member of the Presidential Honor Guard, Griffin was depicted as a model black Marine on the cover of the *Marine Corps Gazette*. He had a flawless record until he refused to join his unit when it left for Beirut on 18 October 1983. "If I had gone to Lebanon," he said later on the stand, "I would have been put in a situation in which I would have had to take arms against other Muslims." The Marine brass had a politically explosive situation on their hands, complicated by the fact that only a few days after Griffin returned to Camp Lejeune on October 19, more than 240 Marines were blown up in their barracks in Beirut. So they offered Griffin an "all is forgiven" deal to rejoin his unit in

Beirut. Griffin refused. When the unit was diverted for the assault on Grenada, the Marines tried to send him there. But citing religious and moral grounds, Griffin again said "No" to all "offers" to kill Muslims and blacks. Therefore, on November 29, special court-martial proceedings were begun, the prosecution seeking their heaviest penalty.

Reagan and the racists gloried in the sight of white Marines ravaging a black and largely defenseless Grenada. But a military machine based heavily on black enlisted men poses serious problems for U.S. imperialism. Racist Marine Corps "justice" was demonstrated in the case of the Camp Pendleton 14 in 1976. A group of black Marines defended themselves against repeated terror raids by Ku Klux Klan Marines and the military threw the blacks into the stockade. For the U.S. military with its endless history of war crimes, from atom-bombing Nagasaki to mining Nicaraguan harbors, the "crime" is to refuse to carry out murderous orders. American military and civilian "justice" means that Lieutenant Calley, the butcher of My Lai in Vietnam, is driving around today in a Mercedes in Columbus, Georgia thanks to a pardon from Jimmy Carter, while Corporal Griffin, who refused to commit such atrocities, gets imprisonment at hard labor.

The case of Corporal Griffin reveals the Achilles' heel of American imperialist militarism. The rotting U.S. economy has driven tens of thousands of

desperate black and Hispanic youth into the recruiting stations as a last-ditch means to escape starvation. Griffin himself told reporters that he signed up at 19 because he couldn't find work and wanted job training. But under fire, many GIs, especially minorities, realize that they don't want to be cannon fodder for their oppressors. Some, like Corporal Griffin, object for religious reasons. No doubt many recall Muhammad Ali saying "No Vietcong ever called me nigger." At the time of the Beirut bombing, we noted that the widespread American outrage was mainly directed at the imperialist commander in chief. We seek to channel this outrage against the entire imperialist war effort. And as for vicarious bloodthirsty "leftists" who say of the Marines in Beirut, killed in a senseless imperialist adventure, "live like pigs, die like pigs," we wrote: "We can only despise those who call for the death of American soldiers for the crimes of their rulers" ("Marxism and Bloodthirstiness," *WV* No. 345, 6 January).

It took courage for Corporal Griffin to stand up to the USMC. But more than an individual's moral stance is required to fight racist U.S. imperialism. As a crucial part of the struggle to achieve a socialist society we need to burst asunder the U.S. armed forces from within, mobilizing the ranks against the brass who are prepared to slaughter *millions* in the Cold War crusade against Communism. Proclaiming solidarity with their "foreign" class brothers against the bosses' wars, revolutionary soldiers and sailors will inscribe on their banners: "The Main Enemy Is at Home!" ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

No. 355

25 May 1984

Exchange on Corporal Griffin

Workers Vanguard

July 5, 1984

Dear Comrades:

It's a funny thing about bad political positions -- sometimes they just won't go away. In this connection, we found your article on the case of U.S. Marine Corporal Alfred Griffin (Workers Vanguard No. 355, 25 May) of interest. The vindictive punishment of this man by the imperialist military is an outrage. But so is your attempt in the article to link your own cowardly call for saving the survivors of the demolition of the Marine barracks in Beirut with his refusal "to go to Lebanon...to kill fellow Muslims."

Quite a few of the Marines who went to Lebanon to kill Muslims didn't come back. That sometimes happens to those who sign up to fight the dirty colonial wars of imperialism. We don't think it's such a bad thing either -- apparently you do. We don't care how many Marines walked out of Beirut and how many were taken out in coffins. All we care about is that they left. You wanted them all out alive. So we have a difference. While you were cringing in anticipation of what the Reagan administration might do to anyone who made unpatriotic noises in the wake of the decade's biggest military setback for U.S. imperialism, we observed that those who lived like pigs frequently end up dying like pigs. Our slogan may have been too angular for you -- but it was not bloodthirsty. (It wasn't original either -- as you are well aware.) It is simply an objective encapsulation of the risks run by colonial gendarmes. Corporal Griffin may very well have saved his own life by refusing to go to Lebanon and kill Muslims.

At your educational in Chicago on 5 May, SL Central Committee member Seymour took your revisionism one step further and asserted that the Marines were "no better and no worse" than any of the various communal militias in Lebanon. Coming from the leading theoretician of the tendency this repudiation of the Leninist position on imperialist intervention in "third world" countries is shocking. Presumably Seymour thinks that calling for saving the Marines makes more sense if the issue of imperialism is downplayed. So he blithely announced that the militias of the squabbling semi-colonial peoples of Lebanon are equivalent to the military SWAT team of the world's most dangerous imperialist power.

What's next? Will WV begin to worry about the safety of all the poor economic draftees in the British army of occupation in Northern Ireland? Perhaps Seymour thinks that the British Army is "no better and no worse" than the IRA and the UDA. Will we soon see a call for "British Troops Out of Ireland, Now, Alive!" in WV? Somehow we doubt it -- after all, they're not Americans.

It was remarkable that while joining the Democratic Party chorus calling for getting the Marines out alive, WV never once advocated saving the French paratroopers. Why not? They too had their ranks thinned by a Shi'ite truck bomb. We suspect that their nationality was a factor. Social-patriotism begins (and ends) at home.

Corporal Griffin is indeed a man of principle. We applaud his refusal to "live like a pig." But your cowardly flinch (based on the calculation that it is more important to safeguard your "good name" with your own ruling class than your claim to the revolutionary tradition of Bolshevism) is a shameful blot on the record of the international Spartacist tendency. It is reminiscent of Farrell Dobbs' craven expression of remorse over the assassination of imperialist chieftain J.F. Kennedy.

Bolshevik greetings,
External Tendency of the iSt

SL Reply

The self-styled External Tendency (ET) has again displayed its dismissive and contemptuous attitude toward black oppression. Not once in their letter do they mention that Alfred Griffin is a black man in a white-ruled racist society -- as if this isn't important! -- and they disappear the fact that he refused to fight in black Grenada. This Marine corporal's refusal to fight in Grenada and Lebanon personifies a fundamental problem for American imperialism, namely, that a large fraction of its combat forces consist of black men who are deeply alienated from the white ruling class and less susceptible than whites to anti-communist and anti-Soviet prejudices.

Imperialist armies consist of young workingmen sent off to die for the interests of their rulers. Thus every capitalist armed force shows potential contradiction -- it can be polarized along class lines between the officer corps and the ranks. This potential is particularly explosive in the dirty, unpopular, no-win colonial wars of decaying imperialism, and in the case of the present U.S. military is exacerbated by the high proportion of black soldiers.

As a Spartacist spokesman put it to the ETs at the Chicago educational referred to in the present ET letter:

"...one of the most objectively racist speeches I've heard by someone who claims to sympathize with us. Do you think that the fact that a disproportionate number of combat troops of U.S. imperialism are black and Hispanic doesn't matter? This is a social fact of potentially enormous historic importance. Why do these blacks join the Marines? Join the army? Because they want to kill in the service of Ronald Reagan? Is that what you think? No! You have no sense of the desperation of black people in this country. You're contemptuous of them. Because the army is the only place they can get three square meals a day, and they get a warm place to sleep and learn a job skill. That's why they're in there. They're the most alienated, they're the people who are least anti-Soviet. So what happens? Reagan sends them over to Lebanon and they get killed. Every interview [in Lebanon] and the interviews in Camp Lejeune say, 'this guy [Reagan] is getting us killed, we want out!' That's the stuff of which mutinies are made. Of course, Nicaragua's different. They go in, we want them to be defeated. Insofar as they have to take casualties, we want the Marines to take casualties. But that's not just our program. A revolutionary government in Nicaragua would also appeal to these black soldiers, would try to fraternize with them, would try to win over the prisoners

of war. [It] would say, look, you are fighting for an unjust cause. That's the stuff that revolution in this country is made of, and you have no sense of that whatsoever."

The Lebanon disaster is universally recognized as Reagan's biggest foreign policy defeat so far. Central to our position on the Lebanese conflict encapsulated in the slogan, "Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive!" is that none of the myriad factions were fighting for a just cause. All sides are squalid and no side is fighting imperialism. The ET implicitly supported the Shi'ite/Druze/Syrian forces. They do this dishonestly, through the false analogy with Northern Ireland, an analogy they have used repeatedly. In Northern Ireland British troops are the state power upholding the Protestant-supremacist (Orange) government which oppresses the Irish Catholic minority. In making the analogy of Lebanon (before the Marines were withdrawn last February) and Northern Ireland the ET is implying that the Shi'ite/Druze/Syrian side was waging not only a war of national liberation against U.S. imperialism but also a just struggle against a reactionary government. This is a cynical effort to prettify the Lebanese reality as do the Stalinists, SWP, Mandelites, Marcyites and revisionist left in general.

The analogy between Lebanon and Northern Ireland is wrong -- indeed, absurd -- at both levels. To begin with, the Marines constituted a token military force, which, moreover, hid in their bunkers during most of the fighting. As former Israeli chief of staff Mordechai Gur explained a few months before Reagan ignominiously pulled the Marines out:

"...the U.S. hope for establishing a strong central government in Lebanon is unrealistic. No foreign military intervention can accomplish that -- certainly not the U.S. Marines, whose force is so small that nobody takes it seriously."

-- Newsweek, 19 December 1983

Secondly, the Maronite-dominated Gemayel "government" did not oppress the Lebanese Muslim population for the simple reason that it did not govern them. Apart from the Israeli-occupied south, the effective public force in the Muslim communities since last September has consisted of fellow Muslims (Shi'ite Amal militia in West Beirut, Druze militia in the Shuf Mountains, Syrian army in eastern and much of northern Lebanon). In recent months much of the fighting in Lebanon has been among the various Muslim communalist forces.

The present fighting in Lebanon is essentially a continuation of the communalist bloodletting which broke out in the 1975-76 civil war. The presence of a few thousand U.S. Marines guarding Beirut Airport did not change the character of the conflict. The ET sometimes likes to posture that it is upholding the old Spartacist positions against alleged revision by the SL leadership. However, it is the ET's line on Lebanon which in substance repudiates our position on the 1975-76 Lebanese civil war, which was then and remains a touchstone of our opposition to the Stalinists, nationalists and New Leftists who applaud the empty "anti-imperialist" posturing of oppressive, pro-imperialist Third World factions and regimes.

When we raised the slogan "Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive!" it was coupled with the slogan, "U.S. Out of Grenada, Dead or Alive!" This fact -- which simply refutes the ET's contention that we seek to make ourselves palatable to social-patriots -- illuminates our Marxist opposition to the vicarious bloodthirsty ET posture on the Marines: "live like pigs, die like pigs." Over Grenada, where unlike Lebanon there was a just cause at

stake -- the defense of the rights of the people of Grenada against the imperialist, racist U.S. invasion -- our distaste for violence and loss of life is subordinated to our support for the victory of the just cause, by whatever means are necessary, against the violence of the oppressors. But even here, we unlike the ET do not claim to enjoy the fact that sons of the working class -- black and white, American and French and what have you -- must die for the crimes of their rulers.

-- Workers Vanguard No. 360, 3 August 1984 (emphasis in original)

ET Rejoinder

September 21, 1984

Spartacist League

Comrades:

It is unfortunate that Workers Vanguard, a paper which once had a reputation even among its political opponents for scrupulousness and integrity, cannot address a polemic to the External Tendency without resorting to smears and slanders.

Your response to our letter on the Griffin case (WV No. 360, 3 August) is a case in point. It begins with an ugly (yet ridiculous) race-baiting smear that we demonstrated a "dismissive and contemptuous attitude toward black oppression" by failing to reiterate the fact that Griffin is black. The article continues by quoting Joseph Seymour's attack on us at the Chicago educational on 5 May for "one of the most objectively racist speeches I've heard by someone who claims to sympathize with us." Strong stuff! But why not clinch the argument by quoting the offensive remarks themselves? We know why -- because to do so would expose Seymour as a slanderer. What he found so "racist" was the elementary observation that just as economic desperation induces some oppressed plebian youth to volunteer for the military (what the reformists call the "economic draft"), it leads others to become cops and scabs.

It is clear from Seymour's remarks that you have a rather benign attitude toward the U.S. Marine Corps. Indeed you seem to view it as some kind of government-sponsored social service which enables black and minority youth to trade the misery of life in America's ghettos for a regular paycheck, fresh air and "three squares." Small wonder then that you refer to the defeat inflicted on Reagan's colonial gendarmes in Beirut as a "disaster" and that your first reaction was to call for saving the survivors.

Your pro-imperialist "neutrality" toward the American intervention in Lebanon is clearly indicated by Seymour when he contrasts it to a hypothetical future incursion in Nicaragua: "Of course, Nicaragua's different than Lebanon. They go in, we want them to be defeated. Insofar as they have to take casualties, we want the Marines to take casualties." But not in Beirut -- there you didn't want them to be defeated, and you explicitly didn't want them to take casualties. Why not? Because, as Seymour explained in the same speech, the Marines were "no better and no worse" than any of the indigenous semi-colonial militias. (We note that you discreetly neglected to comment on this piece of anti-Leninist revisionism in your reply, despite the fact that we had explicitly challenged you on it in our letter.)

Lebanon and Northern Ireland

In earlier polemics we pointed to the parallel between Northern Ireland and Lebanon, i.e., that in both cases there is (or was) an imperialist military intervention into an inter-communal conflict. We suggested that the Spartacist League/Britain would deeply discredit itself in the eyes of every class-conscious worker were it to raise a call for "British Troops Out of Ireland, Now, Alive!". In your reply to us on Corporal Griffin you claim that this is a "false analogy" for two reasons" "To begin with, the Marines / in Lebanon / constituted a token military force, which, moreover, hid in their bunkers during most of the fighting." Oh really? Here's how you yourselves described the U.S. military intervention a few short weeks before the demolition of the barracks:

"...the U.S. is now committed to defending the Phalangist gangsters with an additional 2,000 troops drawn from the American fleet in the Indian Ocean, a total of 14,000 Marines both on shore and off and 12 warships standing off the coast and 100 warplanes..."

"Behind the military escalation in Lebanon is U.S. imperialism's global war drive against the Soviet Union..."

"The Pentagon has abandoned the pretense that U.S. forces fire only when fired upon. A few days ago U.S. warships shelled positions deep in Syrian-controlled territory in retaliation for anti-Phalange forces bombarding the defense ministry in Beirut. U.S. forces are now routinely providing artillery cover for the Lebanese army..."

"A year ago...we wrote: 'The U.S. forces in Lebanon are a beachhead for large-scale military intervention in the region -- directly posing the danger of a nuclear World War III.'"

(WV No. 338, 23 September 1983)

Further on in the same article you approvingly quoted Democratic Congressman Clarence Long as noting that: "Any 9-year-old kid watching television can see our people in combat, but the President of the United States doesn't see this as combat." Well apparently in hindsight, neither does WV!

But quite apart from your current attempts to falsify the role and activity of the American military intervention in Lebanon, there is an important issue of principle involved here -- i.e., that Trotskyist opposition to imperialist intervention in the semi-colonial world is unconditional. We don't care who fired first, who was minding their own business, or who was hiding in their bunkers. We don't care whether the imperialist forces constitute the state power (as in Northern Ireland) or merely act as auxiliaries to one side in the conflict (as in Lebanon). We want all the imperialists out, immediately, by any means necessary.

The second distinction which you make between the two situations is equally specious. You assert that unlike the Protestants in the six counties, "the Maronite-dominated Gemayel 'government' did not oppress the Lebanese Muslim population for the simple reason that it did not govern them." But surely that was what all the fighting was about -- to determine which of the warring communities would get to oppress the others. For that reason revolutionists could take no side in the conflict between the indigenous populations. But when any of these peoples is militarily engaged with an imperialist power -- whether in Northern Ireland or Lebanon -- we do have a side. And that is why the analogy is fundamentally sound.

You seem to have the peculiar notion that your call for the defeat of the Marines in Grenada somehow cancels out your flinch over Lebanon. It doesn't. All it proves is that it was easy to be tough over Grenada. Reagan didn't care what you said about that one -- he won.

The Beirut "disaster" was a different story. It was the biggest single military defeat inflicted on the U.S. since the Tet offensive. It ultimately compelled the U.S. to pull out of Lebanon and was thus an important setback to American plans to make Beirut a staging area for anti-Soviet military moves in the Near East. Reagan didn't like that. So just to be on the safe side, just to make it clear that you weren't any more pleased by this military reversal than the Democrats, you adopted their program for the Marines in Lebanon. Reagan's deployment is "stupid" and "senseless" you said -- let's get them out now before more are killed. Tip O'Neill was saying the same thing. Eventually even Reagan came to see that this advice was in fact in the best interests of American imperialism. So he carried out your demand -- he got the "Marines Out of Lebanon, Alive!" Congratulations.

You can continue to pretend that your flinch over the barracks bombing was motivated by Bolshevik intransigence. You can probably even convince some of your more impressionable new recruits that anything else would have been "bloodthirsty." (Although how will you explain the headline on the front page of WV No. 207, 26 May 1978, on the slaughter of whites in Zaire: "Colonialists: Live Like Pigs -- Die Like Pigs!") Serious political people who carefully examine the question will draw their own conclusions.

Over the past year, under minimal pressure, the leadership of the Spartacist League has consistently demonstrated a lack of backbone. The cowardly flinch in defense of the Marines in Lebanon was prefigured by the failure to uphold the unconditional defense of Soviet airspace during the furor over the downing of KAL 007. Last July, at the time of the Democratic Party convention in San Francisco, you once again showed your yellow stripe when you refused to participate in a demonstration against the sinister Moral Majority. Indeed, you even had the temerity to slander us for "setting you up" by marching (under our own name) in that demonstration. Instead of protesting Jerry Falwell, or, as we had proposed, attempting to initiate a united-front demonstration against a planned KKK provocation, you flaunted your "peaceful, legal" appetites with an obsequious (and ludicrous) offer of defense guards to protect Fritz Mondale et. al. from a hallucinatory "threat" of attack by Reagan, Dianne Feinstein and the fascists. In WV No. 361 you take this new orientation to the Democrats one step further when you repudiate the fundamental Marxist position that from the point of view of the proletariat there is "not a dime's worth of difference" between the twin parties of U.S. imperialism. We wonder what's next.

Communist greetings,

External Tendency of the iSt

P.S. We just noticed the box on the July 28th El Salvador demonstration in Cleveland (WV No. 362, 14 September). Once you start lying, it is so hard to stop. You suggest that the reason we marched with you in Cleveland "must be" because we didn't see your "signs defending victims of racist military 'justice' from Captain Dreyfus to Corporal Griffin." This is willfully dishonest. Our letter on Corporal Griffin, which you printed only two issues earlier, clearly stated our position, i.e. that "the vindictive punishment of this man by the imperialist military is an outrage." We can only presume therefore that this latest calumny is intended to make cynics of those who are under discipline to defend it.