

## *Desperately Seeking Snetkov*

A leaflet issued by the Bay Area Bolshevik Tendency on 8 September dealing with the imperialist aggression against Iraq made the elementary observation that:

“Revolutionaries should not look either to the ‘soft’ Stalinists in Moscow or to the ‘hard’ Stalinists in Havana for action in this crisis. The only force that can do the job is the same one that Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky looked to—the international proletariat.”

The ostensibly Trotskyist Spartacist League (SL), which only a few years ago organized a “Yuri Andropov Brigade” in honor of one of Stalin’s successors, has taken a different tack. At the outset of the crisis, Helene Brosius, the Spartacists’ international secretary, sent a letter to various Soviet ambassadors (with a copy to the SL’s favorite Soviet officer, General B.V. Snetkov) “demanding” that the cowardly Kremlin bureaucrats stand up to the imperialists and supply Iraq with armaments. “We should make vigorous efforts in the current situation,” Brosius advised. The “we” is of course the Kremlin and their would-be deputies at the Spartacists’ New York headquarters.

There are several problems with the proposal, one of which is the obvious incongruity of “united fronts” between elephants and fleas. In principle there is nothing wrong with making demands on the Stalinists, but it only makes sense when they at least purport to stand for the defense of the workers and oppressed against the imperialists. Throughout the 1980s we demanded that the USSR grant the Nicaraguan Sandinistas’ requests for MIGs to defend themselves against imperialist attack. At that time the Soviet Union was keeping Nicaragua

afloat. In the current situation in the Middle East, however, with the Soviets unambiguously *supporting* the imperialist aggressors, making such a demand is absurd. The Soviet bureaucrats’ policy toward Iraq is a corollary of their declared intention of restoring capital-ism in the USSR.

Such considerations are of little interest to the Spartacist polemicists. The 5 October 1990 issue of *Workers Vanguard (WV)* accuses us of “balk[ing]” at the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union because we “did *not* crib our [i.e., the SL’s] demand that the USSR rescind its arms embargo of Iraq.” The scribes who toil in the *WV* editorial offices apparently see no contradiction between this accusation and their pronouncement in the same issue that, “the wretched Gorbachev regime in the Kremlin has come forward as Bush’s hard cop against Iraq.”

Brosius concluded her August epistle to the Soviet bureaucracy with a gentle reminder that: “The Soviet government fought to the end, successfully, to keep the oil fields of Baku out of the hands of the imperialists.” The only time the imperialists occupied Baku was during the civil war in 1918-19. The Soviet government that “fought to the end,” and forced the British to abandon Baku, was the Bolshevik government of *Lenin and Trotsky*. On 5 August 1937, when Stalin was acting as a “hard cop” against the Spanish Revolution, Trotsky observed that, “To equate the October Revolution and the peoples of the USSR with the ruling caste is to betray the interests of the workers...” We could hardly agree more. ■