
FOR THE REBIRTH OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!

**BULLETIN OF THE EXTERNAL
TENDENCY OF THE iSt**

No. 1



August, 1983

Why We Publish

"It is necessary that every member of the Party should study calmly and with the greatest objectivity, first the substance of the differences of opinion, and then the development of the struggles within the Party. Neither the one nor the other can be done unless the documents of both sides are published. He who takes somebody's word for it is a hopeless idiot, who can be disposed of with a simple gesture of the hand."

-- Lenin (as printed over the masthead of the first issue of The Militant, 15 November 1928, and reprinted in the preface to MB 2)

This is the first issue of the Bulletin of the External Tendency of the iSt. As the publication of the External Tendency, this organ has as its goal the reversal of the degeneration of the iSt. To this end we seek to aid in the crystallization of a principled opposition to the present regime of the SL/US and the iSt. This is not a public organ. It is intended solely for circulation within the iSt and among former members and political supporters of the tendency.

It is necessary to publish this bulletin to make available the positions of the External Tendency to the members of the iSt. As we note elsewhere in this publication, one of the first victims of a degenerating revolutionary organization is the truth. One of the earliest points of demarcation between the Spartacist grouping and Wohlforth's ACFI was Wohlforth's fondness for the "revolutionary" lie. Regrettably the Spartacist tendency has itself of late shown a rapidly diminishing respect for the truth. This departure is most pronounced internally.

The series of purges which have wracked virtually every section of the tendency in the last several years have generally been carried out on the basis of political characterizations which were stretched so far that they ceased to have any relation to reality. When this proved insufficient, the case was bulwarked by outright lies. Non-existent "cliques" have been discovered and charges of "racism," "sexual manipulation" and other slanderous accusations have been made. Of course there is no solid proof offered to back up any of these false charges, but that doesn't seem to matter. The mass hysteria of the witchhunt has replaced any attempt at political confrontation over the alleged "political" differences which the leadership claims underlie the recent purges.

As these practices have increasingly become the norm internally, they have inevitably tended to spill over into the external life of the tendency. Much of the material which appears in this bulletin is evidence of that. Uli Sandler is slandered as a "proto-fascist." Bob Edwards is alleged to have walked out of a memorial meeting that over one hundred people (mostly SL members) saw him sit through. Members of the External Tendency are characterized as "Zionists" for suggesting that it was appropriate to raise the call for the Israeli soldiers to turn the guns around during the invasion of Lebanon last summer and for Israeli workers to strike against the invasion. And there are many more examples which could be cited.

All of these bogus allegations have their origins in the regime's desperate need to fabricate a political case against those ex-members who have refused to do the leadership the favor of either retiring from politics or renouncing Trotskyism as a result of their experience in the SL. This poses an acute problem for Robertson & Co. as there was in fact no programmatic origin to most of the "fights" which have taken place of late in the iSt. They were, as we said in our founding declaration, at root apolitical authority contests by which the New York leadership has sought to pre-empt the possibility of any challenge to its hegemony within the tendency.

In politics everything has a price and the price for adopting such procedures internally is a membership which is increasingly cynical and depoliticized. The characteristics of the Healyite cadres of the late sixties are more and more in evidence today in the membership of the SL -- particularly among a layer of ambitious members who want to "make it" in the organization. Hard, but cynical, anxious to ingratiate themselves with the leadership and with little concern for their own political integrity, or even the formal political program of the organization which they have joined, they are the inevitable products of what is rapidly becoming the "new school" of Spartacist politics -- the "throw-enough-mud-and-some-will-stick" school. This is not a good school, and it is not a Trotskyist school.

The bulletin of the External Tendency will publish news of the modest but real work of our supporters, as well as comment on current developments in the iSt. We have learned that some of the material that we have circulated in the past has been withheld from the membership in certain localities. By distributing this publication to the members and political supporters of the iSt, we intend to break down the leadership's monopoly of information about the real state of the tendency.

It is a tragic irony that the crisis of proletarian leadership, which the iSt was created to resolve, is now the most urgent question within the tendency itself. As the leadership of the Spartacist League increasingly atomizes, isolates, disorients and drives out its cadre, it inevitably departs from the Bolshevik traditions and program which it helped keep alive in the world for two decades.

We seek to make this bulletin a beacon of orthodox Spartacism for those cadres wrestling with the acute contradiction between the revolutionary program of the tendency and the increasingly irrational and destructive practices of the leadership. We will criticize what must be criticized, correct "disinformation" when it appears and counterpose Trotskyist politics to the accelerating political departures exhibited by the SL today. Most importantly, we publish this bulletin as evidence of our determination to play an important role in salvaging the revolutionary work which the founders of the SL began over twenty years ago.

(Grammatical and spelling errors have been corrected on items reprinted in this bulletin.)



While TLC Paper-Sellers Look On

Trotskyists March for Military Victory to FMLN

On Saturday June 25, a dozen people marched with the External Tendency in Toronto on a demonstration called by a coalition of liberal reformists and fake leftists to protest U.S. intervention in Central America. Five days earlier the Toronto ET had contacted the Trotskyist League of Canada and suggested joint participation on the demonstration, the largest of the year on this question. The TL replied that they weren't planning on marching but declined to give any explanation. Individual TLTers later said that the decision was made on the basis that the group had already gone to one demonstration that week (in opposition to the closure of a local abortion clinic) and that was enough for one week.

Undeterred by the torpor of the TLC, the Toronto branch of the External Tendency set out to organize a Trotskyist contingent for the demonstration. Upon arriving at Christie Pitts, the site of the march, the ET invited the numerous Spartacist Canada salesmen in attendance to march with it when the demonstration commenced. Regrettably the comrades of the TL declined the offer of a chance to march under their own slogans. The ET contingent formed up with signs in hand. These included: "Defense of Cuba/USSR Begins in El Salvador!" "Remember 'La Matanza' 1932 -- No Negotiated Sellout!" "Smash the Contras in Nicaragua! -- Defend, Complete, Extend the Revolution!" "Smash Canadian/U.S. Imperialism in the Caribbean and Central America" "Military Victory to Salvadoran Insurgents!" and "Vietnam was a Victory! -- 2, 3, Many Defeats for Imperialism!"

As the march of 600 began to head out of the park on its way downtown, a reformist marshall made a feeble attempt to force the ET contingent to the back of the march on the basis of its Trotskyist politics. Ignoring the marshall, the contingent, led off by the flag of the Fourth International, marched out in disciplined formation.

The demonstration was dominated by the politically dangerous lie of the reformists calling for a "negotiated peace" as well as an assortment of nauseating, moralistic/Canadian-nationalist slogans. Two which captured the flavor of the self-righteous, nationalist piety of the official march organizers were the following: "Canada, You Must Say More; Speak Out Against the U.S. War!" and "Trudeau, Trudeau You Can't Hide; Speak Out Against the Genocide."

If not for the loud and sharply counterposed Trotskyist slogans of the ET which were delivered with regularity throughout the three-mile march route, the snivelling moralism of the reformists would have gone politically unchallenged. Several TL comrades tagged alongside the ET contingent throughout the march, snapping pictures and trying to sell the odd copy of Spartacist Canada to spectators. These comrades, who showed such an interest in our contingent, explicitly (and impolitely), refused to join in chanting slogans right out of the pages of the press they were selling.

When the march finally arrived at its destination at City Hall, the organizers immediately announced their plans to hold a mock mass "die-in." This grotesque charade provided a grisly foreshadowing of what lies in store for tens of thousands of workers and peasants in El Salvador if the reformists and their fake-leftist hangers-on achieve their goal of a "negotiated peace" with the junta butchers.

Before leaving the rally site the ET counterposed a spirited chant of "1-2-3-4, Leftist Rebels Win the War! 5-6-7-8, Nothing to Negotiate!" to the disgusting spectacle of the reformists "die-in." The ET contingent was followed by several SC salesmen who had abruptly changed the focus of their intervention from hanging around the fringes of the demonstration to attempting to politically challenge the ET. The result was a wide-ranging and somewhat heated exchange lasting an hour in which the TL comrades were soundly defeated politically on virtually every point.

PATCO: Why 'Fly, Fly, Fly?'

The following excerpts of correspondence are from a discussion within the External Tendency of the origins of the SL leadership's shameful decision to "fly, fly, fly" during the PATCO strike of 1981.

Toronto, December 1982

PATCO is an entirely different matter. There it was not a question of capitulating or adapting to any pressure. It was a conscious and cynical attempt to sidestep their own program for reasons of personal convenience. They themselves realize that their actions would have discredited their calls to "shut down the airports" and they therefore don't advertise the shameful fact that they flew during the strike.

...it would be false to claim that the SL's action was politically motivated (i.e., that the reason they flew was because they in some way supported Reagan's strikebreaking). It is not very "political" but we believe they used the facilities simply for convenience. Departures from the revolutionary program and traditions do not necessarily always begin with a fully blown political basis. Therefore we would argue that there was no substantial political reason for Robertson et al to adopt their PATCO position. To ascribe it to personal whim or bureaucratic convenience is only to describe reality.

Oakland, February 1983

On PATCO: I am not comfortable with the "personal convenience" argument as the SL's central motivation for flying; in my 6/1/82 letter to the SL, I said their position could reflect "an internalization of the SL's opponents' view that the SL does not seek to influence events but only to raise its banner in its own wind." Perhaps another, more specific explanation is in order: the SL is losing confidence that it can affect the organized, employed working class, i.e., the U.S. working class is too backward, PATCO therefore is doomed, there are no real picket lines, so since it's convenient -- "fly, fly, fly."

Toronto, February 1983

On PATCO: I tend to agree. It is not simply a matter of convenience, it is the result of a long period of stagnation and a certain demoralization in the leadership (as we pointed out in the document, nothing much good has happened to the SL for eight or nine years, except international expansion which they have pretty much crippled or ripped up at this point). Instead of leading social struggles, they are turning inward and exerting power and influence where they still can -- like over the unfortunate clones, etc.

The concomitant growth of self-confidence by the leadership as a result of a feeling of lessened restraint by the "external" world and the diminished prospect of any internal opposition has produced a kind of corrosive cynicism whereby Robertson seems to feel that he can produce a Marxist "theoretical" justification for anything which he decides to do -- flying during an airline strike becomes...strike support(!) as well as a powerful blow against the petty bourgeoisie who want to "boycott" the scab services, because, you see, boycotts are diversionary and true Marxists like us refuse to settle for anything less than labor strikes to shut the airports tight. In the meantime we go across the lines....

Flying during the PATCO strike represents the intersection of the leadership's loss of confidence in the organization's ability to influence the working class with its overweening confidence in its own ability to do practically anything at all internally and get away with it. Once again the regime question.

But all of that is to say that the routine and pervasive departure from Leninist organizational practices is the product (and to date by far the most important reflection) of the stagnation of the organization. To date it hasn't really acquired a distinctive, characteristic programmatic character -- except on the organizational question -- although there is constant "leakage" into other questions...

Three Days in June

Bay Area ILWU Strike: Defensive Victory or Sellout?

In late June the ILWU in the Bay Area conducted a successful port-wide defensive strike against Levin Terminals, a viciously anti-union company in Richmond. The victory was obtained despite the handicap of a fearful, dilatory and inept local leadership of business unionists and a defeatist International. The local bureaucrats at times even threatened to fine members for trying to stop scabs! But the militant longshoremen nonetheless squashed Levin Terminals' attempted union-busting. And union-busting was the key issue at Richmond.

In the course of winning the strike (which was conducted in violation of the ILWU's contractual "no-strike" clause), the longshoremen engaged in mass picketing; backed off the Richmond cops; openly defied a court injunction and won significant solidarity support from another key maritime union.

When the dust had settled the ILWU had re-established its jurisdiction at Richmond Paar 5. No non-union labor is loading vessels. Members of the Operating Engineers were permitted to continue to operate the cranes as they have done for decades despite the fact that they had helped in the failed ILWU-busting effort.

WV Gets It Wrong -- Very Wrong

The 1 July Workers Vanguard article entitled "Bay Area Port Shutdown Sold Out" characterized the outcome of the strike as a defeat, a "complete sellout." This article represents an appalling break with WV's record of accurate, Trotskyist journalism on the waterfront and elsewhere. It contains over a dozen inaccuracies, omissions and distortions culminating in the rewriting of one of the most politically important maritime strikes in the Bay Area for decades.

The inventions and omissions by the authors of the fallacious WV piece show considerable contempt for the Bay Area waterfront workers, and indeed, for a sizable chunk of the local SL membership who were present for much of the strike. Those SLers who were present and who believe that it is important to speak the truth must be flinching at the crude shoehorning of events to fit a sectarian (and ultimately defeatist) formula.

In order to justify its step-by-step abandonment of the trade-union arena, the SL leadership apparently feels compelled to "prove" that all workers' struggles not led by the Spartacist League must inevitably end in defeat due to the sabotage and betrayal of the "Reagan-loving" bureaucrats.

The key test of an organization's real program lies in its practice. The confusion and virtual abstention during much of the Richmond strike by SL supporter Stan Gow revealed the flip side of the substitutionalist and ineffective El Salvador and South African boycott pickets which he attempted to initiate recently on the waterfront. Stan's disorientation stands in marked contrast to the tradition of SL-supported trade-union work. That tradition was carried forward by ET supporter Howard Keylor in the fight to defend ILWU job jurisdictions at Richmond.

For six months a confrontation had been building over the first major attempt to drive the ILWU off the docks in many years. About two years ago Levin Terminals, an independent waterfront employer, had purchased and expanded the Richmond Paar 5 facilities where longshoremen had worked ships since the union was founded. Since last December Levin management had made it clear that they intended to replace all ILWU workers on future container, auto and break-bulk operations. In December 1982 Levin had worked a sea-going barge with containers and in March loaded a ship with coke using no ILWU members. No action had been taken other than a token picket of the barge.

For six months Local 10 officers had blocked all militant strike tactics pleading fear of court injunctions and police attacks. They had advocated putting up only a few informational pickets and lodging complaints against Levin over lack of pollution controls.

For six months ET supporter Howard Keylor had repeatedly and at every opportunity, in print and at meetings, argued for mass pickets and warned that without a defiance of court injunctions, Levin's union-busting attacks would succeed and spread to other industrial docks on the waterfront. As late as the June membership meeting where Keylor rose to defend Stan Gow he set the stage for turning the membership debate on Stan's trial into an attack on the officers' cowardly refusal to defend the union against Levin.

Keylor Calls for Mass Pickets

Six months of patient and persistent propaganda finally culminated two days before the strike when Keylor put forward a motion at the Executive Board (which had constituted itself as a strike committee and then did next to nothing throughout the strike). Keylor's motion, which directed the officers to send every longshoreman not working (approximately 1,200 members) to the picket line at Richmond, passed overwhelmingly. In the meeting Keylor also argued, without success, to set up mass pickets at the pier entrance Saturday morning before the scabs came through and to put out picket boats to stop the ship from docking.

SL supporter Gow had been pretty quiet about Levin's union-busting attacks for the whole preceding period in the local. Perhaps this reflected an abandonment of hope of any real fight until the membership threw out its "Reagan-loving" officers and invited the Militant Caucus to lead them. In any case, at the key Executive Board/strike committee meeting on June 23rd, Gow muttered, in a confused manner, about needing 100 or 200 pickets per ship. After Keylor spoke and put forward his motion, Gow, to his credit, didn't counterpose his proposal.

The local officers failed to adequately mobilize for the picket so by 1:00 p.m. Saturday, June 25, only 300 to 350 longshoremen had showed up in Richmond. Once they got there they were instructed to stand by until the ship docked (Levin had ordered ILWU linemen) so that one last attempt to negotiate could be tried. Keylor, who had argued against tying up the ship, replaced himself (went off the payroll) and declined to tie up the ship. The ship, the Sunda Career, docked about 3:45 p.m. At 4:45 p.m. (after Levin had again refused to negotiate) the officers finally ordered the picket lines to be set up.

Workers Vanguard deliberately lied when it stated that "...the picket line was set up at noon, four hours after work had started on the ship..." The motive for this rewriting of history became apparent the next Thursday when SL member and WV salesman, Steve S., accosted Howard Keylor in front of the union hall and asked him whether he had worked behind the picket lines at Richmond. (About 2:30 p.m. Saturday, before the ship arrived, Keylor had employed a subterfuge to

accompany the officers of the local past the extremely tight security inside the pier, in order to scout the physical operation. He was the only Executive Board member who had extensive experience with that type of loading operation. Keylor came back out half an hour before the ship arrived and an hour and a half before the picket lines went up.) On the waterfront slanderous charges (or even snotty implications) of scabbing deservedly got the provocateur physically dumped. Is that what the SL leaders were trying to provoke? If so, they failed.

Day Two of the Strike: Gow Works Overtime!

Stan Gow, the Militant Caucus and a large Workers Vanguard sales team left the picket line at 7:00 p.m. Saturday with Stan announcing loudly that the strike was lost and that he would not be back. The next day, while the picket lines grew and the workers became angrier and more combative at the spectacle of their jobs going down the drain, the Spartacist League and the Militant Caucus were nowhere to be found. While one of the most important strikes in decades on the Bay Area waterfront was taking place in Richmond Stan chose to work overtime at Sea-Land!

Keylor continued to talk to the members urging them to demand that the officers pull out the entire membership and seal off the pier. Sunday afternoon he took de facto charge of the picket boats for the duration of the strike.

Sunday the strike spread when the officers, under pressure from the membership, shut down another container ship whose agent, General Steamship Company, was also agent for the struck Sunda Career. Sunday evening a draconic court injunction came down, limiting pickets to two men -- all other longshoremen to remain silently 1,000 feet away. The court ordered that there should be only one picket vessel 5,000 feet out in the bay. Longshoremen ignored the injunction and the picket line grew. All day Sunday, and far into the night, hundreds of longshoremen called the union hall demanding action to stop the loading of the Sunda Career. What was necessary in order to channel this militant sentiment effectively was the formation of an elected strike committee. A lesson from the Richmond action is the necessity for elected strike committees from the boards and gangs to take control from the beginning to avoid the bureaucrats' foot-dragging and sabotage.

Monday the officers finally responded to rank-and-file demands and shut down all Bay Area ports. Mass pickets estimated at 1,200 men and women sealed off Levin Terminals from the land side. About noon Monday the three longshore picket boats were joined by a large tug manned by members of the Masters, Mates and Pilots Union who threw full support to the ILWU. Keylor acted as liaison with the MMP pickets. With the ship now bottled up (no tugs or pilots to take it out) Levin caved in, stopped the ship-loading operation, asked permission for the strikebreakers to leave the pier and go home and agreed for the first time in six months to negotiate.

Degenerates' Alchemy: Labelling Victories Defeats

The three-day Bay Area longshore strike verified in a dramatic way what the Militant Caucus had been patiently arguing for years -- that militant mass picketing and maritime workers solidarity would successfully back off the courts and defeat the employers. Workers Vanguard dismisses the fact that the ILWU got away with ignoring the court injunction, openly violated their contractual "no-strike" clause, and won the active support of a key maritime union. Workers Vanguard virtually disappears these important achievements with its false conclusion that the strike was lost.

The SL's recent tendency to ignore the dual nature of the trade-union bureaucracy gave it some trouble in reporting the strike. Workers Vanguard is unable to explain how the local officers, who SL supporters had been characterizing as conscious agents of Reagan and the bosses only a few weeks previously, could be forced by the rank and file to carry out militant strike tactics.

Longshoremen's participation in the first mass waterfront picketing in decades and their militant determination to fight, which was enough to force the bureaucrats to ignore court injunctions and defy contract arbitrators, should be seen as a verification of years of Militant Caucus propaganda work within the union. This work has been continued by ET supporter Howard Keylor since he left the Caucus in November 1981 over his refusal to abandon his position on the Executive Board of the union and leave the field free for the reformists and bureaucrats. Keylor has never lost confidence that workers would fight and could win when they were shown the way forward.

The fact is that the agreement re-established ILWU jurisdiction at Paar 5. The coke-loading operations are new and the ILWU was granted a manning scale similar to that previously used on scrap-iron loading operations, six men -- not four as Workers Vanguard and the Longshore Militant describe. The entire ILWU manning is supplementary to the Operating Engineers Local 3 crane operators and hatch tenderers and to the Laborers Union Local 1088, thus resulting in dual union manning. Instead of jointly sharing the work or at least having ILWU members "standing by", the local officers allowed Levin to simply pay men for reporting to work and then going home, a practice which undermines jurisdiction on bulk operations.

Both Workers Vanguard and the Longshore Militant suggest that the ILWU should have demanded throwing all non-ILWU workers -- union and non-union -- off the pier. Workers Vanguard: "...formalizes anti-union 'ghost worker' practices." Longshore Militant: "...rotten and formal practice of non-longshoremen doing longshore work with a facade of ILWU workers." The Operating Engineers have operated the cranes at that pier for over twenty years and neither the union nor the Militant Caucus had ever advocated throwing them off the job.

The Militant Caucus was never in favor of raiding or taking the jobs of workers belonging to another union with long-established job jurisdiction. The way to convince Operating Engineers' members to stop their union from raiding and colluding in union-busting is not by stealing their jobs in turn. (This proposal, which was put forward by some justifiably enraged longshoremen when the strike settlement was announced, was given back-handed support in the latest issue of the Longshore Militant, now published by the Militant Caucus.) The answer lies in demonstrating that effective union action can defeat the employers and organize new jobs under union jurisdiction. Indeed the kind of action the ILWU took, done effectively, coastwise, could actually create new jobs for all waterfront workers by winning a shorter workshift at no loss in pay, and abolishing the vicious steadyman system. The jurisdictional problem was further complicated by Levin having transferred its Laborers 1088 workers from the scrap yard operation to the dock-side coke receiving and handling operations -- a practice which Local 10 officers allowed to go on for months.

What was mainly at stake at Richmond Paar 5 was Levin's stated intention to replace ILWU longshoremen, clerks and walking bosses on container, auto and break-bulk operations at that pier. Union-busting at Paar 5 could have started a domino action by other industrial dock operators to smash the ILWU on the waterfront. Levin Terminals has now agreed to recognize full ILWU jurisdiction on all future container, auto and break-bulk shiploading operations -- a major

defensive victory that will require vigilant enforcement by the union. (One steel ship has been discharged since with full ILWU manning.)

Apparently believing their own rationalization for dismantling SL trade-union work, Gow and the Militant Caucus' role in the strike was abstentionist and ineffective. Gow failed to assume even the minimal role incumbent on an Executive Board member and absented himself from the picket line for 36 hours. (This is consistent with Stan's almost total abstention last year around solidarity actions with the Canadian longshore strike which, as he later apologetically told Howard who fought for such solidarity, he had thought was over.) On Monday the Militant Caucus circulated through the assembled pickets, unsuccessfully peddling their loathsome and ridiculous slander that Keylor had conspired with the "CIA-loving" officers in a political frame-up trial against Stan Gow. Unable to politically justify the wrecking of SL-supported trade-union work, the SL leadership resorts to slandering Keylor who is trying to salvage the wreckage of exemplary revolutionary trade-union work in longshore. Within the union Keylor provides a limited but significant political leadership while fighting for the construction of an alternative class-struggle leadership. Such an alternative leadership, based on the full Transitional Program, must be crystallized from the militancy which led to the Richmond port action, the Puget Sound longshore shutdown which won the Inland Boatmen Union's strike three years ago and the Los Angeles solidarity strike during the OCAW strike in 1980.

For the purpose of throwing filth at those who are continuing the tradition of SL-supported trade-union work and to alibi the SL's own sectarianism, Workers Vanguard resorts to printing an article so inaccurate and dishonest as to discredit Trotskyist journalism in the eyes of the workers. For eight years the Militant Caucus (and for the past two years the present supporters of the External Tendency) have told longshoremen that Workers Vanguard is the most reliable, honest and principled journalistic spokesman for workers interests. The hundreds of workers who were on the picket line and know from their own experience that Workers Vanguard presented a falsified version of the strike will doubtless treat future reports on events elsewhere (like Poland or El Salvador) more skeptically. Waterfront workers could come to ignore Workers Vanguard as they have come to ignore Challenge and Revolution as unreliable and irrelevant.

In their developing exit from the arena of trade-union struggle, the SL leadership would seem to be pursuing a policy of deliberately shitting on the floor, casually squandering the slow but real gains of nine years of principled revolutionary work among Bay Area waterfront workers. It is time to call a halt!

Documents of the External Tendency

- 1) "Declaration of an External Tendency of the iSt", published October 1982.
- 2) "Stop the Liquidation of the Trade Union Work! Break with the Robertson-Foster-Nelson Misleadership!", published 25 June 1983.

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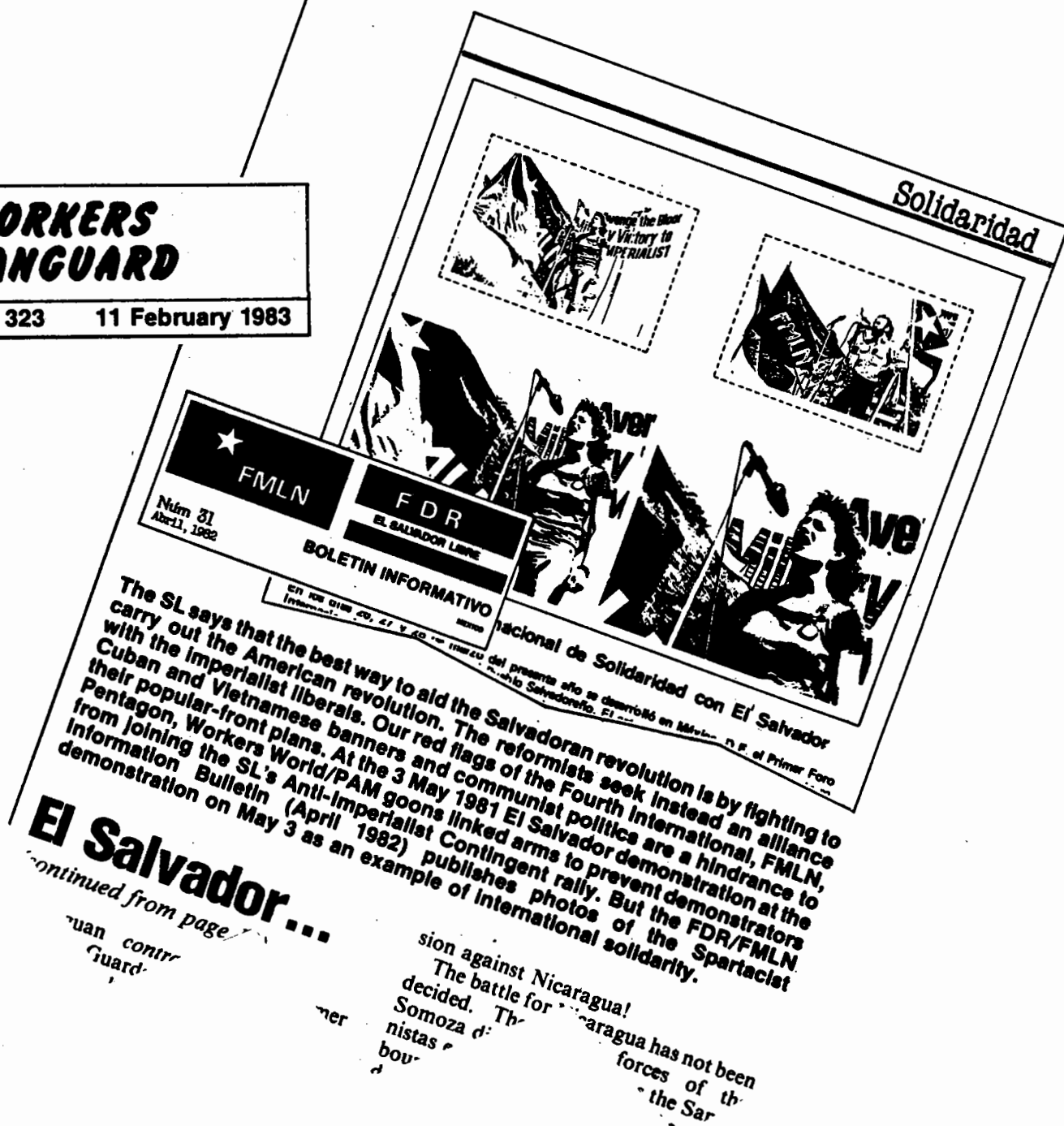
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WORKERS VANGUARD

No. 323 11 February 1983



FMLN Flag: Who Fooled Who?

The lengthy photo-caption reprinted above from Workers Vanguard No. 323 celebrates the fact that pictures of the SL's Anti-Imperialist Contingent were featured in the April 1982 issue of the Salvadoran FDR/FMLN propaganda sheet. WV claims that the AIC's FMLN flags are a hindrance to the popular front plans of the FDR's fake-left supporters in the U.S., as indeed they are. Privately, of course, Sam Marcy et al are only too willing to make known their

complete support for the FDR/FMLN. This doesn't prevent them from gooning the SL for the "crime" of calling for military victory to the FMLN. The reformists are compelled to do so in order to ingratiate themselves with the "progressive" wing of the Democratic Party which seeks a political solution to save El Salvador from communism.

But the popular frontists of El Salvador have no major political differences with their brothers in the incipient popular front in the U.S. FDR leaders have explicitly supported Reagan's desire to stop communism in Central America. Why then do they choose to publicize the banners of the Spartacist League's AIC? Obviously because they had no idea it had anything to do with Trotskyism. And indeed, there is not much Trotskyism evident in the pictures they reprint from Workers Vanguard. The fact that the popular frontist propagandists can use WV's own photos of the AIC speakers standing in front of the flags of the FMLN confirms that carrying the flag of the military wing of the popular front only serves to blur the fact that the AIC was a Trotskyist, and not a pro-popular frontist contingent.

Some SL spokesmen have demagogically claimed that carrying the FMLN flag in the heartland of imperialism shows revolutionary courage. Those who call for military victory to the leftist rebels but do not want to wave around Ungo's banner presumably therefore only demonstrate their own cowardice. Perhaps it is time for the SL to re-evaluate its assessment of the Mandeliste wing of the United Secretariat and other sundry "Trotskyist" third-world cheerleaders who spent their time in the sixties and early seventies running around with NLF flags and chanting "Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh" in the heartland of imperialism.

For our part we prefer to follow the example of Cannon and the revolutionary SWP of the 1930s in their attitude to the popular front in the Spanish Civil War. We don't think that their refusal to carry the Republican flag, while extending military support to the Republican side in the civil war, was due to cowardice. It is the duty of Trotskyists to provide the proper program and strategy to those battling imperialism and not to simply show political "solidarity" with their class-collaborationist leaderships. When the third-world misleaders of the FDR confuse the Spartacist League with their supporters, it is time for thoughtful SL cadres to ask themselves who is really making the mistake.

Bureaucrats Back Democrats

ET Supporters Campaign for SL at SF Labor March

On October 24, 1982 tens of thousands of workers in the Bay Area marched in a "Vote Labor for Jobs and Justice" demonstration. Workers Vanguard reported that only 20,000 marched while the bourgeois press and parade organizers put the figure at 50,000 or more. The demonstration was initiated by the labor bureaucrats for the purpose of lining up votes for the Democrats in the upcoming elections. Even though the SL was running two candidates in the election (Diana Coleman and Richard Bradley), the organization did not attempt to participate in the march to counterpose communist class-struggle politics to the treachery of the pro-Democratic Party labor lieutenants.

Since the event the SL has elevated its non-participation to the level of a principle. SL spokesmen have charged ET supporters who marched with showing an appetite for accommodating to the Democratic Party. We are proud of the fact that our supporters marched and proud of the slogans they carried. Stan Gow, a well-known SL supporter in ILWU Local 10, marched in the union's contingent. Howard Keylor, a class-struggle militant in the same local and a supporter of the ET, also attempted to march in the contingent but was excluded for carrying a "Vote Spartacist" sign. Stan wasn't excluded because he didn't carry anything which differentiated himself from the march organizers.

We reprint below Stan's subsequent self-criticism for participating in the demonstration and excerpts from an unpublished letter from Howard Keylor to WV on the subject of the march.

Excerpt by Stan Gow from Longshore-Warehouse Militant (14 January 1983)

For example, I should not have taken part in the October 24 march.

This was no "labor parade," it was a big pep rally to turn out the vote for the Democratic Party. The slogan, "Vote Labor for Jobs and Justice," meant in practice to "vote Democrat," the racist party of those who exploit and oppress all of us and from whom we'll get no jobs or justice. It was a bad thing that thousands of workers were out there that day because it strengthened the hand of our enemies. Howard Keylor marched that day too but he doesn't think it was a mistake.

Excerpt from Letter to Workers Vanguard from Howard Keylor (18 November 1982)

...at San Francisco's belated Labor Day demonstration, I and two others were excluded from marching with the ILWU Longshore Local 10 contingent because of my sign which said "Break with the Democrats! Build a Workers Party! Vote Bradley/Coleman -- Spartacist Candidates -- S.F. Board of Supervisors." We were excluded by a joint decision of AFL-CIO/ILWU officials who interestingly didn't dare object to our sign saying "Picket Lines Mean Don't Cross -- No More PATCOs."

Determined not to be excluded from this demonstration of 50-70,000 workers (three to four times the bureaucrats' expectations), we looked for an opportunity to rejoin the march toward the rear...

One "Vote Spartacist" sign among thousands was enough to scare the trade-union bureaucrats; how much more powerful it would have been if the comrades of the Spartacist League and their trade-union supporters had not just distributed literature but had been there with "Vote Spartacist" signs too. The bureaucrats' control apparently broke down at the rally (many left groups had literature tables and electoral signs), where later we walked all over the area holding our signs aloft and talking to workers. We found wide rank-and-file support for the slogan "Break with the Democrats -- Build a Workers Party."

...On October 24 the labor leaders were clearly determined to use the march and rally as a device to get out the labor vote for the Democrats; the official signs carried read "For Jobs and Justice -- Vote Labor." Nevertheless, a well-organized contingent carrying signs with the Spartacist Party slogans and using flexible tactics could have had a powerful effect. "Break with the Democrats -- Build a Workers Party" is a slogan whose time has come.

Ultra-Left Kiwanis Club?

Oroville: ET Calls for Labor/Black Defense

For those involved in building local Labor/Black Struggle Leagues, the question of how to respond to Nazi/Klan terror is key. The ideal response is for revolutionaries to initiate and lead successful labor/black mass mobilizations as the SL was able to do on November 27th in Washington. However, there are situations where actions against fascism have been initiated by other forces (either ostensible revolutionaries or outright pro-capitalist reformists). In such circumstances revolutionaries should generally seek to intervene where possible, given military and other considerations, in order to win militants interested in fighting Nazi/Klan terror away from the dead-end strategy of the reformists. A recent example of this kind of situation was the December, 1982 demonstration against Nazi/KKK terror in Oroville, California.

There was an initially correct response from SL supporter Stan Gow in the ILWU when he proposed that Local 10 stop work and mobilize to demonstrate in defense of the black community in Oroville. But then things changed. In Longshore-Warehouse Militant No. 17, 14 January 1983, Gow argues that:

"My motion for Local 10 to support the December 11 Oroville 'anti-Nazi' march was wrong, because I learned later that the real organizer of the event was a pro-Democratic Party outfit named the All Peoples Congress...Using the slogan 'We want Jobs and Justice' this was only to be a cynical maneuver to channel anti-Nazi fear and outrage into 'anti-Reagan' votes for the Democratic Party, leaving Oroville's black population defenseless...Furthermore, it was an adventure to call this kind of demonstration in a place like Oroville, a small remote rural town with a large organized fascist group and virtually no organized labor."

Stan's refusal to participate and his denunciation of the action as both reformist and adventurist has been endorsed by the leadership of the SL.

As far as the action being reformist, there is no doubt about that. It would be foolish to expect anything but a reformist orientation from the hodgepodge of Oroville residents, ostensible revolutionaries, Democratic politicians on the hustle and pro-Democratic labor bureaucrats who sponsored the march. It was, however, a demonstration, a mobilization of people against racist terror and not a petition, and could be expected to attract some political novices interested in fighting racism but not versed in the proper way to do so. The SL was prepared to hand over the 1,500 people who attended to the Democrats without even attempting to counterpose Trotskyist politics.

The most important charge is that the whole action was a dangerous "adventure." The logic of this accusation is that those who participated in the demo were setting up the black community in Oroville for further attacks.

But let's look at the facts. Firstly, this was no stunt of the sort that PL is famous for. Approximately 1,500 demonstrated in this town of 10,000. Secondly, the march was endorsed by such Oroville community organizations as the Kiwanis Club, the Little League, the Scouts and the Chamber of Commerce. These organizations are not generally noted for ultra-left adventurism. Finally, a look at the map will confirm that Oroville is only 120 miles from the Bay Area and only 60 miles up the road from Sacramento which is the home of a significant number of ILWU members.

To call the demonstration an adventure presupposes that it is impossible under any circumstances to defend the black population of Oroville. Some SL members have implied as much by their characterization of Oroville as a "Nazi town." We reject such idiot defeatism. We believe that the Northern California labor movement can be mobilized to successfully defeat the fascists in Oroville. Concretely, what would the SL suggest that the black residents of Oroville do? Move? If demonstrations only embolden the racists and set up minorities for attack, then what's the answer? Obsequiousness?

At the Oroville demonstration the only people to march for class-struggle politics were the supporters of the External Tendency and the several ILWU militants who accompanied them. These comrades carried signs which ranged from "Reagan's Anti-Soviet War Drive Abroad Means Nazi/KKK Terror at Home;" "Break with the Democrats, Build a Workers Party;" to a call to "Organize Labor/Black Defense Guards to Smash the KKK/Nazis."

One of the key distinctions between the practice of the SL as a "fighting propaganda group" and that of its various opponents with their own fake "mass work" orientations has always been that the SL has attempted to intervene to fight for its politics in the real mass struggles of the day, and not simply limit its activities to those which it initiates and controls. The SL's abstention from participation in the Oroville demonstration on the grounds that it was being run by reformists was a boon to all those who preach reliance on the Democratic Party. It was also a departure from the past practice of the SL from the Civil Rights movement to the mobilizations over El Salvador.

Self-Imposed Isolation

Equally dangerous is the Militant Caucus' developing position that anyone is a hopeless case who is at this time pro-Democratic or supports the strategy of pressuring the Democratic Party. That makes it OK to boycott their activities (the anti-Nazi march in Oroville) or even to urge workers not to demonstrate against Reaganism under the present pro-Democratic Party union leadership. Stan's statement that "it was a bad thing that thousands of workers were out there that day [i.e., on the Bay Area labor parade, October 24, 1982] because it strengthened the hands of our enemies" summarizes this developing abstentionist position. In effect Stan and the Militant Caucus have said: accept our leadership or we'll have nothing to do with you. This policy is out-and-out self-isolating sectarianism.

Until recently the Militant Caucus and their co-thinkers would have been in Oroville (as I and other longshoremen were), carrying signs aimed at winning the anti-Nazi demonstrators over to the winning strategy of labor/black/latino defense guards instead of essentially abandoning Oroville's black community by dismissing their misdirected efforts at self-defense as "an adventure" (remember Taft, California, 1975?). Until recently the Caucus would have been in the labor parade with signs calling for a break with the Democrats and for a workers party as they did in last year's SF Solidarity Day with PATCO labor parade. This year Stan marched with the 50-70,000 other unionists who deeply resent Reagan's policies which breed unemployment, cuts in medical care, cuts in care for the aged, etc., but he marched with no sign distinguishing him from the pro-Democratic "Vote Labor for Jobs and Justice;" and when I was subjected to an anti-communist exclusion for carrying a sign calling for a workers party and specifically for a vote for the Spartacist candidates for SF Supervisor, Stan kept right on marching without a word of protest.

-- Howard Keylor in Militant Longshoreman, No. 5, 4 February 1983



ET Sign Rankles FDR Rep

On May 7th, eighty people attended an El Salvador demonstration in Cleveland's Public Square. The rally was called by the reformist Cleveland Central American Solidarity Committee around the slogan "Money for Jobs, Not for El Salvador." A small contingent of External Tendency supporters assembled together for the first time to intervene with the Trotskyist program for El Salvador.

The ET supporters demonstrated alongside the Spartacist contingent (which was roughly twice as large). An ET spokesman offered the comrades of the SL a defense bloc. Apparently flustered by the initial appearance of ET supporters in town, the Cleveland SLers refused to respond to the ET's proposal. During the demonstration the SL actively discouraged its contacts (who were obviously interested in the political identity of the ET and the SL slogans) from talking to ET contacts.

The ET's unsigned signs called for: "Military Victory to Salvadoran Leftists" "For a One-Day West Coast Port Shutdown to Aid El Salvador Rebels" "Defense of Cuba/USSR Deformed Workers States Begins in El Salvador" "Military Victory to the FMLN" "Break with Ungo/Zamora Pop-Front -- For a Workers and Peasants Government" and "Nothing to Negotiate, the Only 'Political Solution' -- Workers Revolution."

This last sign (which was the only one carried by anyone present at the demonstration that explicitly opposed the reformists' negotiated settlement line) so rankled the main speaker, Guadalupe Gonzalez, a representative of the popular-frontist Democratic Revolutionary Front of El Salvador, that she singled it out for attack. She launched into a tirade against people in the crowd (i.e., ET supporters) who said there was no political solution short of workers revolution. She counterposed the FDR's sellout proposal for a negotiated settlement. Gonzalez was right about one thing -- there is no common ground politically between those who fight for the Trotskyist program of workers revolution and those who seek to lead the heroic struggle of the Salvadoran insurgents into a bloody defeat under the suicidal banner of a "negotiated peace" with the pycopathic right-wing butchers who run the Salvadoran army.

Bay Area Student Struggle

A Missed Opportunity for the SYL

On February 16, 1983 a united-front action took place at Laney College in Oakland. In solidarity with actions being taken at the University of California, Berkeley and Merritt College, and to protest the threat of up to \$100 per semester tuition for all California community college students, one of the largest departments at Laney was shut down and over 250 people turned out to protest. The rally was called under the demands "No Tuition," "No Class Cuts," "No Lay-offs" and "Defend Ethnic Studies." In marked contrast to the usual "write your congressman" reformism, it was animated by the participants' realization that their demands could only be achieved by militant student/instructor/employee action. Even some of the most passive reformists on campus felt compelled to give lip service to this kind of action.

The character of the demonstration at Laney resulted from a combination of several events. The year before the Peralta Board of Trustees had first threatened and then finally carried out program cuts and lay-offs of 33 instructors — thereby devastating many key programs. While there was plenty of anger among students and instructors over these cuts, any militant sentiment was channeled into impotent letter-writing schemes by the well-organized reformist groups on campus. By the end of the year however, it became clear to many students that these "proper channels" strategies were useless and virtually all of the reformist groups left the campus discredited. Cde. Lisa S. (now of the External Tendency) had distributed a leaflet that year stating the reasons for the cuts and pointing out the only effective way of fighting back. The leaflet was received with interest by students and many instructors. Some of them brought it up again this year. In the fall semester of 1982 the entire bureaucratic "business-as-usual" student government was recalled and replaced with a new group, many in their first year, who the students hoped would be "more responsive" (i.e., do something). At Laney in the spring of 1983 there were no reformist groups on campus and there was a totally new student government whose subjective sentiments were for action.

When talk of tuition began in the spring of 1983, Laney students had had enough. They wanted to fight back against the constant attacks being made against them, but there was no organized group on campus to lead the fight. When students at U.C. Berkeley announced they would hold a one-day boycott of classes to protest fee increases there, the Laney student government decided to call for a boycott of classes on the same day. One week before the planned action, the student government put out a call for a boycott at Laney. The Laney student government, most of whom had no prior political experience, naturally began to follow the lead of the only leadership they could find -- the reformists at U.C. Berkeley.

During this period a revolutionary Marxist youth group, carrying out a skilled intervention, could have had a field day. As it was, the only Trotskyist intervention at Laney came from cde. Lisa S., who, at the earliest opportunity, began discussions with the organizers of the action. As a result of these talks (with individuals and with the student council as a whole), combined with hard interventions at council meetings and forums, the beginnings of a militant strategy were developed. The demands of the SYL Merritt demo: "No Tuition," "No Class Cuts," and "Defend Ethnic Studies" were all argued for by Lisa S.

These demands were adopted for the Laney demonstration and provoked a lively discussion about how they were counterposed to the "logic" of the capitalist educational system. In the course of the discussion, a majority of those involved came to the realization that these demands could only be won through militant student/instructor/employee action -- not by writing to congressmen. February 16th was seen as the first step in a drive for this type of action.

The necessity for students to link their struggles with the trade unions was also discussed in detail and the call for a sanctioned strike gained a lot of popularity. Out of this discussion came the demand "No Lay-offs" in an attempt to involve the Peralta Federation of Teachers in the action. Another discussion was devoted entirely to the united front, how it differs from the popular front, and on the absolute necessity for workers democracy.

As a result of these discussions and interventions, the February 16th demonstration was a genuine united front action. More importantly, if the SYL had bothered to come to the Laney campus, they would have found an open opportunity to take over the leadership of the anti-tuition fight which easily could have been turned into effective student/instructor/employee action. Lisa S. had even won a small base of support for the SYL's slogans on campus -- if only the group had bothered to come and build on it.

Presented with the opportunity to do very effective political work at a predominately minority and working-class campus, the SYL disappeared. Instead of the SYL coming onto the campus and attempting to organize students for a militant fight, students had to try to organize the SYL! The night before the rally, Lisa S. called the SYL and invited them to speak. She told them that speaking time had been reserved for them, and that many students wanted them to speak. The next morning the student council president made two attempts to contact the SYL with no success. Other attempts were made shortly before the rally, but the SYL never showed up. During the rally attempts were made to find the SYL in order to get them to speak but the organization hadn't even bothered to send a sales team! Finally ET member Lisa S. made sure that the approximately 250 students heard the Trotskyist position on the fight against tuition. Did the SYL refuse to speak at Laney because an External Tendency comrade had played a major role in building the demonstration? (See letter from Lisa S., "On the SYL's Anti-Cutback Strategy," YSp No. 108, April 1983.)

The SYL attempted to justify their irresponsible abstentionism in YSp's introduction to the letter by claiming that "the strategy of the various student governments (including that at Laney College) is one of begging the Democrats in the California Legislature to rescind the fee hikes." During the brief period around the rally, this was not the case. However, no protest movement can last for long without a political leadership and the SYL, by refusing to give this leadership when it was requested, in effect drove the students at Laney towards the U.C. Berkeley reformists. The SYL could have established itself clearly as the Trotskyist pole on campus. Instead, the loathsome Morenoite IWP, which moved into the vacuum to try to take advantage of this situation, is growing outrageously at Laney, despite Lisa S.' best efforts to inoculate campus militants against it.

Allowing the Morenoites to grow in the city where the iSt has almost one-quarter of its total membership is an extremely serious political error. It dwarfs the negligence of the Morris regime in Detroit toward cauterizing the Ann Arbor-based RWL. If the SYL "boycotted" Laney out of sluggishness, routinism or organizational incompetence, that is bad. But if, as it would appear, the SYL didn't show out of a desire to "protect" its ranks from contact with the External Tendency, then that is far worse. To abstain from work which should be an important political priority for that reason is an admission of political cowardice.

Trotskyism vs. Stalinism in Cleveland

The following leaflet was distributed by the External Tendency to the founding meeting in Cleveland of the Communist Youth Organization -- the latest incarnation of the CPUSA's youth group. The fascist SS Action Group staged a provocation against the CYO in Cleveland at the same time as the conference.

In the weeks which preceded the launching of the CYO, an ET representative called the Cleveland SL on several occasions to suggest that it produce a leaflet to intersect the Stalinist youth. The response was non-committal. Fearing that the SL might fail to attempt to intervene into the conference, the ET produced and distributed the following leaflet. Thus the CYO members were treated to two essentially politically identical Trotskyist leaflets at their founding conference. (The SL's leaflet is reprinted in Young Spartacus No. 109, May 1983.)

THE CYO SHOULD BE RUNNING THE NAZIS OUT OF TOWN TO CELEBRATE MAY DAY!

The SS Action Group is staging a provocation in Cleveland today. They've come to organize acts of racist terror. They've also come to show that the Communist Youth Organization (CYO) has no more effective a strategy to stop them than the Communist Workers Party (CWP), five of whose trade-union and civil-rights militants were murdered by the Nazis/KKK with police collusion in Greensboro, N.C., in November 1979.

The Nazis and their KKK, White Power allies want to put the policies of the bloody U.S.-sponsored El Salvador junta into effect in Cleveland and throughout the U.S.: the fascists aim to destroy the unions, particularly integrated industrial unions like the Steelworkers, UAW and IAM; the fascists will practice mass murder to impose a "final solution" on Cleveland's black community, as well as on Jews and gays; and the fascists will annihilate all leftists, socialists or communists.

The Nazis chose Cleveland today to offer themselves to big business as shock troops against the CYO. They are trying to show through their boldness and the CP/CYO's passivity that the Nazis/KKK have the solution to U.S. capitalism's second Great Depression: violence, intimidation and race war to divide and conquer the working class and keep capitalist rule intact.

The CP/CYO leadership is playing directly into the fascists' hands. Rick Nagin, chairman of the Ohio CP, told the Cleveland Plain Dealer (April 21) that the CP had been working with the police to prevent violence. Greensboro has again shown the potentially fatal consequences to the left and labor movement of relying on either local, state or federal police. What about the vicious police murder of George and Jonathan Jackson and Angela Davis' subsequent jailing? Or the Taylor case? Or the FBI's collusion in the killing of Viola Liuzzo by a KKK-FBI hitman in Alabama in 1965? Or the violence of the Cleveland area police against the strikers during the Little Steel organizing drive in the 1930s? In recent months, from Boston to Austin to Ann Arbor, the police have been unleashed to attack anti-fascist protestors. The capitalist police have a side --

it's not the side of communists, workers, blacks or the rest of the exploited and oppressed.

The Stalinized Communist Party surrendered to Hitler without a single shot being fired. It was lulled by its false, sectarian Third Period theories that "after-Hitler-us." Frightened by the results, Stalin and Co. swung the other way to the Popular Front. They sought liberal capitalist allies, assuring the bosses that the CP would fight for "democracy" now and defer the socialist struggle to the future. From the Spanish Civil War to Chile under Allende, this strategy of allying with or seeking to pressure liberal capitalist forces has meant holding the working class back and has led to defeat after bloody defeat when their erstwhile allies turned on the working class. Today, in El Salvador, the call for a "political solution" advanced by the CP and FMLN is an attempt to woo El Salvador's bourgeoisie with the promise of leaving capitalism reformed but intact when the real solution (already in sight) is military victory to the FMLN and the expropriation of El Salvador's capitalist/feudalist ruling class.

Hall, Davis and Nagin's reliance on Celeste, Voinovich and their police force to deal with the SS Action Group is more of the same. It's designed to signal to the capitalists that while the CP attacks Reagan and pressures for reform, it will, ultimately, practice detente and peaceful co-existence between the millions of unemployed, the elderly whose social security cost-of-living increase is being deferred, starving ghetto inhabitants and the U.S.' capitalist masters.

The Nazis must be stopped and they can be. Liberal columnist Jim Parker suggested in the April 19 Plain Dealer "how about a whole bunch of Clevelanders showing up April 30 and sending the SS and its allies back where they came from." Yes, today the CYO, together with the rest of the Cleveland left, should have mobilized the labor movement and the black, Jewish and gay communities to run the SS out of town. After that would have been the time for a celebration!

Five times since the Greensboro massacre, the Spartacist League-initiated Labor/Black Mobilizations have prevented planned KKK/Nazi provocations or routed them. In Detroit in '79, SF in '80 and last year in Ann Arbor, Chicago and Washington, D.C., thousands of militant workers, youth, blacks, latins, Jews, gays and socialists have taken to the streets to stop the Nazis/KKK. These were not small, heroic but adventurist/substitutionist actions like Greensboro or the frequent PL/INCAR anti-KKK actions. In each case, careful organization by the Labor/Black Mobilization Committees has won active, public support and participation by integrated union locals, the kernel for the organization of on-going union/black defense guards against KKK/Nazi killers. Time and again labor's opposition to the fascists has forced anti-labor Democratic mayors like Coleman Young, Dianne Feinstein and Berry of D.C. to alter their publicly announced plans to provide massive police protection to make sure the fascists got to march. Tied to the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, in not one of these cases did the CP/YWLL endorse the anti-fascist mobilizations. In most cases, they actively opposed them, calling on the mayors to "ban" the fascists instead.

To the delegates assembled today to launch a new CYO, we say you must begin by breaking from the CP's Popular Frontist/pro-Democratic lesser evil strategy and from the CP itself. To win "Peace, Jobs and Equality" a socialist revolution is necessary. To lead the struggle, to crush the fascists, to defend the USSR, Cuba and Vietnam against imperialism while fighting there for political revolutions to establish workers democracy, a revolutionary Trotskyist party must be built. It must be based on the independent mobilization of the working class and all the oppressed to fight for a workers government.

April 29, 1983

Uli Sandler Case: iSt's 'Big Lie'

The following letter was sent by the Bay Area External Tendency to the Trotskistische Liga Deutschlands last December. It protests the TLD's criminal slander of Uli Sandler as a "proto-fascist". Sandler has a record of over a decade as a leftist militant. Until he left the TLD in August 1982, he was a member of the central committee. Less than three months later, on November 5, 1982, he was denied entrance to a TLD public meeting in Berlin on the grounds that he had somehow become a "proto-fascist" in the interim.

There need be no internal logic to a Big Lie, and this is certainly a case in point. All of the "evidence" adduced to justify this repulsive slander was ludicrous: Uli had once sung the "Deutschlandlied" in the bathtub to annoy his girlfriend; he liked "oi" (punk) music; and he owned a pre-WWII German fireman's helmet with a swastika on it. What's more, all of these "crimes" were committed while he was a member of the TLD and no one said anything about them at the time. Three months after he left the organization, they are supposed to prove he's a fascist. Not only a crime, but also a stupidity!

This kind of slander is particularly disturbing coming from a section of the iSt, an organization which has historically placed great importance on its record of telling the truth. It is, however, an act which is unfortunately not simply an isolated departure from the SL's fine tradition. In the course of the hysterical purge campaigns which have convulsed the TLD, as well as most of the other sections of the iSt, truth has often been the first casualty. In the SL/B, for example, several cadres were falsely accused of being "racists" as they were being pushed out the door. Even the pages of Workers Vanguard have not been immune.

In WV No. 300 (5 March, 1982) there is a report of a "walkout" at the Toni Randell memorial meeting in San Francisco. The walkout never happened as the letter from "B.M." asserts in WV No. 303 (16 April, 1982). But far from retracting the initial false report, WV implicitly reiterates the lie in its reply. Even the most loyal and sympathetic reader must have realized that there was something pretty strange going on in the Spartacist League after reading that. (In fact, as we have discovered subsequently, many of them did.)

Lies That Can Kill

The slander hurled at Uli Sandler is the most egregious departure from workers democracy by any section of the iSt to date. (It is paralleled by the slander of Howard Keylor as a "fink" by the SL-supported Longshore Militant.) To cynically call a member of the workers movement a fascist (neo, proto or otherwise) without being prepared to offer proof is a crime, and can only be a symptom of profound political degeneration on the part of those who initiate such a practice. The iSt has in recent years rightly made much of its potential vulnerability to "lies that kill". Well, in West Berlin it is extremely physically dangerous to be labelled a fascist -- particularly to Turkish leftists who are literally involved in a daily life and death struggle with the Grey Wolves and other fascist scum. Reportedly the TLD approached several Turks around the GIM (German USec group) with their lies about Uli. The TLD's slander of Uli Sandler is every bit as much a lie that can kill as anything that anyone has ever said about the SL/US!

As soon as this outrage occurred, a group of ex-TLD comrades (many of whom have since constituted themselves as the Gruppe IV Internationale) circulated a petition which members of the External Tendency signed along with a spectrum of West German leftists. Other signatories included Aydemir Güc, a Turkish leftist and Oskar Hippe, one of the last surviving members of the German Left Opposition and one of those who denounced the murderous attack on Fred Z. several years ago. The petition stated that the signatories did not necessarily take political responsibility for any of Uli's particular political positions, and demanded that the TLD publicly repudiate its slander of Sandler as a "proto-fascist" and re-admit him to all public meetings.

In North America the External Tendency raised this issue aggressively with members of the SL/US and the TLC. The campaign in Germany created enough of a stir that the TLD has been forced to take a half-step back. The most recent reports which we have indicate that the TLD has taken a position that it will no longer bar Sandler from its public meetings -- yet it has refused to retract its slanderous accusations or to apologize to him. This can only be interpreted as a cowardly attempt to weasel out of the consequences of the TLD's proto-Healyite fascist-baiting. A principled tendency that had somehow put itself in this situation would be prepared either to publicly prove its charges (which of course the TLD cannot) or to retract them -- thereby admitting that it had made an extremely serious and dishonorable mistake. Instead the TLD (presumably guided by the international leadership) tries to find an easy way out by stonewalling.

We are pleased that we were able to participate in this campaign against the disgusting slander of Ulrich Sandler. The whole episode is an extremely significant index of the corrosion of Leninist norms within the sections of the iSt. The fact that this could happen in the first place and the subsequent refusal of the German and international leaderships to take any steps to rectify it, indicate that there is something pretty unhealthy about the regime in the iSt. Politically it is on the order of the Ernie Tate case (see Spartacist No. 9).

December 20, 1982

Trotzkistische Liga Deutschlands

We protest against the TLD's accusation that Ulrich Sandler is a "proto-fascist", despite whatever political disagreements we may have with him. We also protest against Ulrich Sandler's exclusion from the public forum of the TLD on November 5, 1982 in Berlin.

Ulrich Sandler's political life is known to most of the members of the TLD since at least 1970. The TLD's leadership themselves were extremely proud of their new recruit; he was the first to be regrouped out of the GIM on the program of revolutionary Trotskyism. Up to Ulrich Sandler's resignation in August 1982, he was a CC-member of the TLD. With his leaving the organization he became one more of the very large number of former members of the international Spartacist tendency.

Instead of asking yourselves why most of your cadres are leaving the organization — and not only in Germany — the TLD tries to avoid political debate with its former members by using lies, distortions and slander. While heretofore the iSt has levelled such largely specious charges as financial fraud, fear of the Reagan years, social democratism, the iSt internationally now says that those who just yesterday were members, today have crossed over the class line to Zionism, racism and fascism.

This designation of a political critic in the workers movement as a "proto-fascist" is reminiscent of third period Stalinist characterizations of German social democracy as "social fascist". Your use of the charge "proto-fascist" is sinister; were it not, the charge would simply be ridiculous. Everyone has known of Uli's fireman's helmet for years. How has it suddenly become fascist? Ulrich is accused of singing the "Deutschlandlied" in the bathtub; does Fred Z.'s well-known liking for the punk rock song "Two Little Hitlers" make him a "proto-fascist", or Jim R.'s disgusting and well-known request for a "steak a la Auschwitz"?

We demand a public withdrawal of the slander against Ulrich Sandler and that you immediately reinstate his right to participate and speak in your public forums; further we demand your defense of him against all physical attacks. By declaring Ulrich Sandler to be a "proto-fascist" you declared open season on him inviting physical attacks. You have the responsibility to see to it that no such attacks occur.

Oakland Members of the External Tendency of the iSt

Poland: No Responsibility for Stalinist Crimes!

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

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

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

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

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

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

Excerpt from Workers Vanguard No. 289, 25 September 1981

Solidarity's counterrevolutionary course must be stopped! If the Kremlin Stalinists, in their necessarily brutal, stupid way, intervene militarily to stop it, we will support this. And we take responsibility in advance for this; whatever the idiocies and atrocities they will commit, we do not flinch from defending the crushing of Solidarity's counterrevolution.

(emphasis in the original)

Weber's Motion, Directed Against the IEC Motion

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

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

International Women's Day March, Toronto, 1983



Editor, Spartacist Canada
Dear Comrades

March 31, 1983

It was unfortunate that the TLC was unable to have a contingent in this year's International Women's Day march. The bourgeois press estimated that 6,000 people participated. We, of the External Tendency of the iSt, were able to participate and marched with the following slogans:

"WOMEN'S LIBERATION THROUGH SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!"

"FREE ABORTION ON DEMAND -- DEFEND DR. MORGENTALER"

"RED ARMY IN AFGHANISTAN FIGHTS FEMALE ENSLAVEMENT!"

"AGAINST SOLIDARNOSC COUNTERREVOLUTION HAIL ROSA LUXEMBURG!"

"DOWN WITH THE ANTI-SOVIET WAR DRIVE! DEFEND THE U.S.S.R.!"

"DOWN WITH THE 'MORAL MAJORITY'! FULL DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS FOR GAYS!"

"FIGHT WOMEN'S OPPRESSION THROUGH CLASS STRUGGLE!"

We hope that in future we can march alongside the comrades of the Trotskyist League.

Communist Greetings.

(Toronto Members of the External Tendency of the iSt)

Keylor/Addison Take the Lead in ILWU

In Defense of Stan Gow

Reprinted below are two items distributed in ILWU Local 10 in defense of Stan Gow by Howard Keylor and Fred Addison. In the leaflet the two militants refuted the phony arguments of the bureaucrats that (1) Stan had misrepresented his action as having the official sanction of the local leadership; and (2) that Stan had jeopardized the income of members of the local by his action. They also argued that the cowardly refusal of the bureaucrats to specify exactly what it was that they were charging Gow with was a violation of the accepted democratic procedures of the union. On this basis they argued that the membership should have a chance to throw out the bogus charges before any trial got started.

At the May 12 Executive Board meeting Keylor attempted to speak against the charges but he was cut off. With Stan and two others Keylor voted against the citation. In the days that followed Keylor and Addison worked hard circulating their leaflet and gathering names on the petition which is also reprinted below. Brother Gow himself signed it along with 71 other members of Local 10.

During Gow's trial both Keylor and Addison stood ready to testify but were never called on by the defense. At the membership meeting which ultimately threw out Gow's conviction both Keylor and Addison spoke strongly in defense of Stan.

The leadership of the SL has responded to this principled defense work with the most disgraceful slanders. In Toronto on July 16, Reuben Samuels, a member of the SL/US central committee, asserted that Keylor and Addison's leaflet was actually designed to advise the bureaucrats on how to get Gow more effectively. Thus for petty factional purposes, the SL leadership become practitioners of the "Big Lie" that one reads so much about in the pages of Workers Vanguard. But like a lot of other lies, this one won't stand close investigation under the harsh light of day. Least of all in Local 10. We advise the leadership of the SL to back off this filthy business and repudiate the slanders before they blow up in your face!

DEFEND SOLIDARITY ACTIONS
IN DEFENSE OF SALVADORAN WORKERS!

NO TRIAL AGAINST STAN GOW!

At the Executive Board meeting of May 12, 1983, Stan Gow was cited under Section 11 of the Local Constitution for "conduct unbecoming of an ILWU member." This action was taken after Stan and "unspecified" Local 6 members distributed a leaflet calling for a one-day work stoppage in opposition to Reagan's plans for increased military and economic aid to the bloody butchers of the El Salvadoran workers and peasants. Earlier, a resolution for a one-day work stoppage was passed by the Local 10 Executive Board and referred to the Caucus and Convention for approval.

The Executive Board acted incorrectly for two reasons: first, no specific charges are being made; second, if grounds for charges exist, they should be clearly spelled out and presented to the Secretary Treasurer in written form. In our opinion, these unspecified "charges" should be brought before the membership. When the membership sees that the citation has no merit, they can then act to dismiss the whole flimsy charge and avoid a costly trial.

At the May 12 Executive Board meeting where Brother Stan was cited, BA Watkins presented only a few bits of information: Stan was observed on his own time, along with a "few members" of Local 6, distributing a leaflet urging Local 10 members not to work the Lafayette, containing cargo bound for El Salvador.

Secretary Treasurer Bancroft stated that the activity was conducted "as if" it had union sanction. However, no one specifically stated that Stan had claimed union sanction for his activities.

Also, it was argued that the PGP could have been lost for the week because of Stan's activities. In fact, the PGP was not jeopardized, because Stan was not acting under union sanction. Even if some men had refused to work, only those who chose not to handle cargo to El Salvador could have been penalized by the loss of PGP. The only person who lost money for the week in question was Stan Gow, who replaced himself for three days, in an unsuccessful attempt to motivate Local 10 support in solidarity with the workers and peasants of El Salvador.

Four members dissented, and a few abstained, on the Executive Board's action. Some members objected on the grounds that a citation by the Executive Board presumes misconduct and guilt. Also, it was argued that since only BA Watkins supposedly had the facts, the citation against Stan should have been made by him rather than the Executive Board.

Keylor was cut off when he argued that the Executive Board couldn't act without an open discussion to find out the facts. He was silenced when he said he had conducted an independent investigation of the facts and wanted to present his findings to the Board. All discussion of the facts was ruled out of order.

Last week an El Salvadoran union leader was a guest speaker at Local 10's building. He spoke about the vicious attacks on, and outlawing of all unions in El Salvador by the military government. This government is the same bunch that Reagan is attempting to prop up with 65 million more dollars of our tax money.

It is ironic that our money is used to accomplish in El Salvador exactly what we imminently face here in Local 10: the smashing of our union. In Richmond Yard 1, Levin Terminals, ships are loaded by scabs -- no linemen, no crane drivers, no stevedores. We are advised by our lawyers to proceed cautiously or we could face the wrath of the government ourselves -- injunctions, fines and jailings. This is the same government that destroyed the air traffic controllers union and is bankrolling the vicious attacks against, and outlawing of all unions in El Salvador.

Some Local 10 members argue that our discussions at union meetings do not concentrate on "bread and butter issues" and that we waste our time discussing issues such as South Africa and El Salvador, while right here in the Bay Area we do nothing to protect or expand our own jobs. We would remind those who claim that politics have no place in union meetings that it was politics and strong, united, coastwide union action that gained most or all of the ILWU's jurisdiction and jobs that we now find slipping away.

The ILWU was able to shut down the City of San Francisco and other western ports in 1934, precisely because of the support from longshoremen and seamen in faraway places such as Canada, Chile and Australia.

Earlier in U.S. trade union history the picket line was recognized as an effective means of achieving actions of workers solidarity. In recent years union officers,

including many of our own, have failed to give leadership to workers on the necessity to recognize picket lines, even ordering union members to cross picket lines. The authors of this leaflet, Addison and Keylor, have always recognized such picket lines, even at the cost of wages or PGP. Perhaps, if the principle of labor solidarity that Stan Gow was attempting to initiate had been upheld, our International Caucus and Convention and other international unions would assume a strong posture and adopt and implement Local 10's Executive Board motion for a work stoppage in support of workers in El Salvador. If we had a better record of actions in support of workers internationally, then we would be in a better position to call on longshoremen and maritime workers overseas to stop ships carrying cargo loaded by scabs who are taking our jobs.

If Stan is brought to trial and convicted, other longshoremen could find themselves under attack for trying to support black South African longshoremen. The racist South African government refuses to recognize the black longshoremen's union. A confrontation is building up where it is likely that black longshoremen will be shot, jailed, and deported to the Bantustans. Longshoremen going to work at a dock where cargo is being loaded for South Africa could be so enraged at the suppression of our brothers, that if they found a group standing outside urging men not to work the ship, they too would join in in urging other longshoremen not to work. Will they be brought to trial?

The action at Berth H was poorly prepared and no serious attempt was made to mobilize ahead of time the many ILWU members who want union action against Reagan's support for the junta's slaughter of workers and peasants in El Salvador. However, Stan acted courageously because he recognized the urgent need for international labor solidarity. The membership must vote to rescind the action of the Executive Board and block the officers' attempt to bring Brother Gow to trial.

Frederic Addison
Howard Keylor

May 15, 1983

NO TRIAL AGAINST STAN GOW!

1. On May 12, with several abstentions, the Executive Board voted 14 to 4 to bring charges against Brother Stan Gow under Section 11 of the Local 10 Constitution. Gow is charged with "conduct unbecoming a union member."
2. While no specific acts were mentioned in the Executive Board motion, the charges are the result of a report by BA Bill Watkins, who described an incident at Berth H 7th Street on March 29. On that date, Brother Gow and a small number of Local 6 ILWU members, appeared outside Berth H urging longshoremen not to work the "Lafayette", that contained cargo for El Salvador. Watkins also reported that Stan, who was on his own time, distributed a copy of a resolution passed by the Executive Board. The resolution, that was addressed to the International Convention, called for a 24-hour shutdown of all main West Coast ports in opposition to Reagan's increased support of the bloody El Salvadoran junta.
3. All longshoremen dispatched to Berth H worked. No one lost PGP or wages except Brother Gow, who replaced himself for three days.
4. If this trial takes place and Brother Gow is found guilty, Local 10 will come down on the side of Reagan and the bloody butchers of the El Salvadoran

workers and peasants. Brothers will be discouraged from initiating or supporting any real actions of solidarity with other workers under attack.

5. Rather than attacking a union member's democratic right to engage in activities of his choice, on his own time, Local 10 should concentrate on defending our union and our jobs against the increased and stepped-up attacks by the employers.
6. We urge the membership to vote to rescind the action of the Executive Board and refuse to bring Brother Gow to trial.

May 19, 1983

Letter to Some ex-TLDers

Reprinted below are excerpts of a December 1982 letter from the External Tendency of the iSt to a group of German comrades, former members of the TLD, who have since constituted themselves as the Gruppe IV Internationale (GIVI). This letter elaborates our differences with the GIVI's analysis of the character of the degeneration of the iSt. These differences underlie our very different orientations to the iSt -- we seek to participate in a struggle within the tendency to reverse the degenerative process, while GIVI has set out on the road of launching a public competitor.

Excerpt from External Tendency Letter to Berlin, December 1982

The first question we have is with your general approach to the iSt. What is it that is fundamentally wrong with the iSt? You state in your letter that "The American-centred Robertson regime is an expression and a result of political deviations." We think that the opposite is true -- that the regime itself is a deviation from the basically Trotskyist program which the iSt still possesses. We think that the iSt's degeneration to date has occurred primarily in relation to the regime question and has not yet reached the point where it is generalized to include major programmatic deviations (although there are a few political 'blips' that we pointed out in our document). A parallel can be drawn with the English Healy regime in the late 1950s and early 60s (although we don't call the iSt Healyite). Healy's organizational departures from Leninist norms preceded his political degeneration which ultimately led him out of the workers movement.

We believe the iSt is wrong in defining a healthy regime as one that puts forward a revolutionary program because it thereby excludes the possibility of an unhealthy regime defending for a time a revolutionary program. Of course, this is a contradiction and it will ultimately be resolved in one direction or the other, but it is a possibility. In fact, we think that it is the state of the iSt today.

We do not think that we have a fundamentally different program than the iSt. Therefore in a certain sense there is no principled reason for our organizational separation from the iSt. That is why we do not encourage members to quit the iSt to join us but rather to fight inside the organization. It is also the basis for our perspective of centering our activities on the iSt and our statement that we would rejoin the iSt if we were guaranteed mutually agreed upon factional rights...

The iSt on the other hand considers us an ORO with a separate political program. They absurdly try to exaggerate minor or even non-existent differences into the counterposed political program which they accuse us of having. They either accuse us of being cowards who are fundamentally unwilling to defend the Soviet Union (which is completely untrue) or else they say they are waiting for us to put forward our real program. The basis for their thinking is their claim that organizational separation must always be programmatically motivated. While in the long run this is true, their telescoping of this process leads them to falsely accuse us of abandoning the Trotskyist program. This technique has the advantage for them of guaranteeing that every destructive and abusive organizational purge has a sufficient "political" basis as long as the result is that the targets end up outside the group.

It seems to us that you approach the question with the same method although from the opposite direction. We await with interest your explanation of what you call "a tendency in the iSt not to see imperialism but the U.S. bourgeoisie as the main enemy of the international working class." But we do not believe the iSt's organizational abuses flow from trying to apply a program that is not Trotskyist. We think that they are in contradiction to the Trotskyist program of the iSt. We do not believe that Robertson launches his essentially apolitical authority fights in other sections of the iSt because he wants to fight the U.S. bourgeoisie to the exclusion of all others, but rather because his hyper-centralized and semi-paranoid organizational practices stand in contradiction to building authoritative national leaderships. Since he sees strong national leaderships as potential threats to his leadership of the iSt, he launches pre-emptive strikes to ensure above all else that the other national leaderships are subservient to him. Since there is no real programmatic basis for these authority contests, he is forced to exaggerate minor differences or invent them. That's where a lot of the political differences come from. We think an examination of the iSt's real political errors will confirm this evaluation....

We think it is important not to exaggerate the nature of the SL's political errors to date too much. We still think they are within the bounds of the mistakes a revolutionary party could make. In exaggerating the nature of the iSt's political errors we think you play the same game as they do in a certain way. Their only defense for their purges is that they are based on clear programmatic counterpositions and therefore justified. The case of comrade Uli is a case in point. If he really was a fascist then it would be correct to exclude him from meetings. However, we all know this is not the case. But what is the fundamental political deviation from Trotskyism expressed by this type of slander? It is simply a bureaucratic Healyite/Stalinist technique of a sort employed routinely by those who are incapable or unwilling to engage in political struggle against those with whom they disagree. We think Uli's case is representative of what is at this time the fundamental departure from Trotskyism of the iSt -- on the regime question. Ultimately it will be reversed or it will take a programmatically rounded form but so far it has not. We believe that premature attempts to extrapolate a definitive departure from the Trotskyist program on the part of the iSt could itself be an important political error because it could lead one to miss what we think is crucial to a correct intervention into the iSt -- the fact that the irrational organizational atrocities are counterposed to the implementation of the program on which the tendency is based. We anticipate that this contradiction will produce a healthy reaction within the tendency at some point. Therefore it is important not to write it off prematurely -- the iSt is still correct on almost every question against everyone in the world. That in itself is an important reason for many cadres to retain their memberships.

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

December 13, 1982

Dear Comrades of the Spartacist League:

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

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

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

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

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

Comradely,

Toronto Members of the External Tendency of the iSt

Defense of the PLO in Lebanon

The following item is a report of an exchange between cde. Nelson of the SL Central Committee and cde. Edwards of the External Tendency. The report is self-explanatory but we have the following observations to add. In a leaflet distributed by the Bay Area External Tendency in October, 1982 we observed about the murderous Zionist invasion of Lebanon that "with the Israeli working class mobilized by the Israeli bourgeoisie for capitalist war, it is equally urgent to appeal to the Israeli proletariat to break from their capitalist masters. Yet not once has WV agitated or even propagandized for the Jewish proletariat 'to turn the guns the other way'...Even after the outbreak of truly mass demonstrations the SL failed to raise the call for the Israeli workers to strike against the war..." For Nelson to suggest that this indicates a political appetite towards the liberal Zionist "Peace Now" movement is both absurd and dishonest.

We note that there is growing opposition to Israel's occupation of Lebanon in both the Israeli army and Israel itself. Yet WV is still not calling for labor strikes to force an immediate and complete withdrawal nor for Israeli soldiers to turn the guns around.

As for Nelson's evidence that the External Tendency didn't take the side of the PLO in Lebanon in June 1982, it is simply ludicrous. In the first place, as related in the report, cde. Edwards had repeatedly suggested to senior SL cadres that the organization undertake immediate action to oppose the Zionist atrocities in Lebanon in June, months before anything was initiated by the Bay Area SL. Secondly, as every SL member who has read the "Declaration of an External Tendency of the iSt" must be aware, it addressed a specific and narrow question -- the accelerating degeneration of the present regime in the SL from the organization's Trotskyist tradition. We "omit" mention of military support to the PLO in Lebanon in the same sense that Trotsky "omitted" a call for black liberation in the U.S. in The Third International After Lenin. This kind of "critique" can only be characterized as low-grade sophistry.

Excerpts from a Bay Area ET Letter, February 1983

From Nelson: The ET are rightists and social democrats. The fact that there is no line in the Declaration of the ET on Lebanon shows that we don't take the side of the PLO. He stated that in '67 and '73 one would have been for revolutionary defeatism on both sides but that in '82 revolutionaries stood for military victory to the PLO. And he stated that I clearly wanted to be in the Peace Now Movement with an orientation towards the Israeli Labour Party...

I reminded him that when Israel invaded, within the first week, I called first Keith D. and two to three days later George Foster, to ask when they were going to stage a protest, urging them to do so, before "Begin imposes the Final Solution;" yet it was fully three months before the SL in the Bay Area took to the streets to protest (after the Shatila and Sabra refugee camp slaughters in September). Further I pointed out that what he said vis-à-vis '67, '73 and '82 was correct; but unlike the ET which called for Israeli labor strikes against the war and for Israeli soldiers to turn their guns around, the SL was silent vis-à-vis the Israeli proletariat. In contrast, I reminded him that during Vietnam, when from the very first day the SL also had a side, it had called for U.S. labor strikes and had not taken the position that the only good Yank in Vietnam is a dead Yank -- the position that Foster had publicly stated to me vis-à-vis Israelis in Lebanon.

Nelson immediately dropped the Lebanon question...

Whither Britain?

Five years ago at the founding conference of the SL/B there was a mood of confidence and optimism. Prospects for the new organization appeared bright. The iSt had just successfully regrouped the left wing of the Workers Socialist League, twenty-three comrades in all, including some of the finest young militants in the British left. "This fusion is one of the largest and most important in the 15-year history of the Spartacist tendency" announced the first issue of Spartacist Britain. With the acquisition of the Trotskyist Faction (TF) of the WSL, the iSt in Britain made the leap from a small grouping overwhelmingly made up of Spartacist cadres implanted from abroad to becoming an indigenous British group.

But despite this promising beginning the history of the SL/B since its formation hasn't exactly been a success story. The group has managed to run in place, at least quantitatively. It still has about fifty members and its newspaper still comes out most months. But marking time in Britain for the last five years is no accomplishment. In that time the SL/B's three largest and most immediate fake-Trotskyist competitors have all turned sharply right and made dreary Labour Party "activism" their top priority. By rights this should have created opportunities on the left for the SL/B's hard anti-Labourism -- to an extent it has, but the SL/B has been unable to profit from them.

Much of the time and energy of the British section since its formation has been spent in seemingly endless rounds of "housecleaning." Of the comrades who joined with the TF in 1978 only three remain. Only one of these comrades had any substantial experience in the British left prior to joining the SL/B. Most of the cadres from a subsequent regroupment from the WSL (the Leninist Faction) are also out of the tendency. The same is true of those cadres regrouped from the IMG in 1981. The leader of that regroupment, a cadre with over a decade in the IMG, survived barely a year in the organization before being disposed of on what appears to have been essentially bogus grounds.

What remains? After five years of existence a large majority of the section's core leadership is made up of in-transfers from other sections. Of those members listed in attendance at the national conference in 1979 barely a third remain in the tendency today. In a highly political society like Britain, individuals continue to be attracted to the powerful Trotskyist program of the Spartacist tendency and the SL/B has been able to recruit enough new people to roughly break even. But only a handful have a political history that predates their membership in the SL/B.

Many of the members' entire political experience has been gained during the purges and witchhunts which have made up so much of the history of the SL/B. Those who have so far managed to survive have acquired a certain facility in the practices in which they have been schooled. But unfortunately for them, techniques which can be employed successfully on people who are bound by programmatic agreement and organizational loyalty to sit still and take it, don't work so well in the real world.

Last April when two members of the External Tendency attended a public class of the SL/B in London to distribute literature and talk to the comrades, they got a first-hand taste of what passes for politics in the SL/B these days. Much of the not very political abuse directed their way during and after the meeting could

hardly be taken seriously. "You make me want to shit my pants" the London organizer told one ET member, who immediately disclaimed responsibility for the comrade's intestinal dysfunction. Other SL/B members, to their credit, attempted to take a somewhat more political tack in the discussions.

Fear and Hysteria in the SL/B

In many cases in the SL/B, as in other sections of the iSt, the organization has driven cadres out using the most vicious slanders. At least two SL/B cadres that we know of, including one of the former TFers from the WSL, have been characterized as "racists." When the half-East Indian sister-in-law of the ex-TFer, herself a recent recruit to the SL/B, attempted to dispute this slander based on her personal knowledge of the comrade, she was immediately charged with covering for a racist! Needless to say she quit shortly thereafter. When an IEC representative addressed the leadership in preparation for the meeting to denounce and dispose of the former TF member, the charge was made that the entire British leadership had shown racist tendencies! Thus the sword of Damocles is hung in the office of the SL/B for future use.

The atmosphere of insecurity, hysteria and fear which pervades the internal life of the SL/B makes it a pretty unpleasant place to live. Most of the people who end up outside the group are bitter about the whole experience. Many of them have explicitly renounced Trotskyism as they spin off to the Labour Party or in a variety of other unappetizing directions.

"Horror stories" about life in the SL/B abound. One that has a particularly nightmarish quality involved one of the most senior cadres of the section who, in September 1981, reportedly mildly dissented from a suggestion that his wife join the IEC team being sent to run a purge of the TLD. He apparently had the temerity to suggest that she might accompany him on a long-planned vacation instead. For this he was bundled off to the IS apartment for a couple of days. Comrades who phoned for him were told that he wasn't taking any calls. Finally, after a few days of what we can only presume were "full and frank discussions," he was put into a car and delivered to the headquarters in time for a London membership meeting. Badly shaken, he reportedly soon broke down and blubbered in front of the assembled ranks. Another mission accomplished for the IEC!

This whole episode is now referred to internally as the time of the comrade's "collapse." It will probably be a while before he raises any more objections to suggestions from the centre. Doubtless the more junior comrades in attendance profited from the demonstration of what becomes of those who raise the most trivial differences with New York.

Servility at One Pole, Authoritarianism at the Other

In the aftermath of the infamous "London Conference" of the IC in 1966, where the SLL leadership expelled comrade Robertson on the most absurd bureaucratic pretext, Harry Turner, then a central committee member of the SL, sent a letter to Gerry Healy. In it he observed that:

"The reason for the behavior of the SLL leadership toward the Spartacist delegation is not hard to find. You obviously wish to create a Trotskyist movement in the U.S. which would be completely subservient to the SLL leadership. Your attacks on Robertson were designed to make him knuckle under and adopt an attitude of humble worship for the omniscient British

leadership. You were not interested in creating a movement united on the basis of democratic centralism with strong sections capable of making theoretical contributions to the movement as a whole and of applying Marxist theory creatively to their own national arenas. You wanted an international after the manner of Stalin's Comintern, permeated with servility at one pole and authoritarianism at the other. You are attempting to fashion an international modeled after the internal regime of the SLL and currently in vogue in your youth movement."

Today in the iSt the "humble worship" is supposed to emanate from London (and elsewhere) while Robertson has assumed the role of omniscient leader. But the relation of the national sections to the international leadership is essentially similar.

Macho Posturing vs. Political Confrontation

A recent example of how the internal practices of the SL/B appear when projected externally was the deliberate provocation staged at a Workers Power "Day of Debate" on Cuba (see Spartacist Britain No. 46, December 1982/January 1983). Workers Power, a miserable centrist outfit that the SL/B should have no difficulty defeating politically, staged a one-day meeting to debate their recently concocted position on Cuba. To this they invited the SL and a variety of other groups. They offered the SL a total of 50 minutes presentation time from the platform, as well as full rights to participate in the debate from the floor. The SL/B was also apparently told that its members could sell any literature they wished in the meeting but they could not set up a literature table inside. Instead of taking the opportunity for a hard political fight, the SL/B, under the leadership of an IEC team, mobilized a large squad of stewards and made a big issue out of enforcing its "right" to set up a literature table in the hall against the wishes of the organizers of the meeting. Workers Power responded, as one might expect of rightward-moving centrists, by threatening to call the cops. The final result was that the SL/B held its own meeting across the street where it addressed its own members and contacts. By substituting macho posturing for political confrontation, the SL/B thus helped seal off Workers Power's membership and the other OROs in attendance from Trotskyism.

Falklands Failure

This is not the only example of the tendency of the SL/B's internal organizational practices to acquire a political dimension. When the Falklands war broke out Ed Kartsen's British tour on New York transit went ahead as scheduled -- while the war was virtually ignored. Hardly a Leninist attitude to the responsibilities of a communist propaganda group when its "own" bourgeoisie is at war. What is truly grotesque is the report of a former member of the SL/B who, during the early

<u>External Tendency Directory</u>		
BAY AREA	CLEVELAND	TORONTO
P.O.Box 904 Oakland, Ca. USA 94668 (415) 562-3308	P.O.Box 14158 Cleveland, Ohio USA 441 14	Box 332 Adelaide Street Station Toronto, Canada (416) 533-4255

stages of the conflict, suggested that the SL/B consider holding a forum on the Falklands to two different Spartacist Britain salesmen. He received the same reply from both: such a forum would be "parochial!" Parochial! Presumably having a forum on New York transit work (that virtually no one came to) demonstrated "internationalism."

There are a couple of points to be made here. Firstly, the failure of the SL/B to effectively respond to the war in the Falklands is a bad sign both for the political health of the section and of the international, which should exist to correct, not promote, errors by the national sections on key questions of principle. Of course in the pages of Spartacist Britain the political line was correct. But instead of making a special effort to circulate the press and publicize the iSt's uniquely correct line on the war, the SL/B cancelled its June issue!

Secondly, the SL/B's failure to respond properly to the Falklands/Malvinas war is an illustration of the connection between the organizational question and the political line. It is an important indictment of the nature of the internal regime of the iSt that not one member of the British section was willing to risk the consequences of making the obvious proposal to postpone or cancel the Kartsen forum in order to address the burning question of the hour -- the war.

A Stagnant Holding Operation

The present situation of the SL/B is not desperate, but it is not good. The cadres regrouped from the WSL, IMG and elsewhere have mostly been squandered. It appears improbable that the SL/B will win any significant new regroupments in the foreseeable future. Viewed from outside, the group is such an unappetizing organizational destination that one would only join out of a deep sense of political principle. "Like taking your medicine" as one wag put it.

Insular and shrill, with a leadership trained to await their instructions over the phone to avoid having to take the rap if anything goes wrong, the SL/B seems to have difficulty orienting itself correctly on the most straightforward questions. The ill-timed flip-flop on critical support to Tony Benn in the Labour Party is a case in point. Doubtless what lay behind this was the SL/B's political timidity and its absolute dependence on New York for instruction on how to respond to every aspect of domestic British politics.

In some situations a holding operation such as the SL/B has been running would be as much as could be hoped for -- but not in Britain over the last five years. The most powerful evidence of this is the disturbing growth of Frank Richards' wretched Revolutionary Communist Tendency (now a self-styled "Party"). The RCT originated as a tiny, demoralized clique split from David Yaffe's Revolutionary Communist Group in late 1976. It was at that time approximately the same size as Station London. It had no publication, very little in the way of cadres and absolutely no programmatic justification for its existence. Today the RCP is variously estimated to be three to five times as large as the SL/B. It publishes a politically worthless but visually attractive 24-page typeset monthly. It also operates several front groups which seem to have some limited but real base. What is worse is that the RCP has picked up a lot of healthy, bright and seemingly serious youth, including a layer of East Indian militants.

The growth of the RCT/P is both a crime against nature and a telling indictment of the crippling effects of the purging and hemorrhaging in the cadre of the SL/B. Not only is the SL/B unable to split or politically sterilize this illegitimate and politically bankrupt competitor, but it is not able to even come close to matching it in recruitment.

The prognosis for the SL/B is not a happy one. It is at present an organization that is not going anywhere and at least some of its members know it. It appears to lack the political capacity and self-confidence to intervene effectively in the political life of the British left and workers movement. Nonetheless, the combination of a powerful and correct program, the political dedication of the surviving cadres and the rich political milieu in which it operates make it quite possible that it will be able to maintain itself at approximately its present level for some time to come.

Within the shrinking constellation of the iSt, the British section remains the largest outside of the U.S. Formally it remains a full (as opposed to sympathizing) section of the tendency. But in reality, the SL/B is a shell. By now it should be clear to most of its cadres, as it doubtless has been to New York for some time, that the SL/B is not going to provide any big breakthroughs for the iSt. Too bad -- because at its founding it genuinely appeared to have that potential. But then a lot of things have changed in the iSt since 1978, and most of them for the worse.

The possibilities of significant growth for authentic Trotskyism in Britain remain excellent. But first it will be necessary to attend to the crisis of leadership in the iSt.

SL's Trade Union Liquidationism Confirmed

In the fall of 1982, over half a year before the SL-supported MAC stewards resigned en masse, the External Tendency undertook a written discussion of the SL's trade union perspective. Not wanting to jump the gun, we were cautious in our assessment of the SL's course in the trade union arena -- too cautious. We reprint below excerpts from that discussion and from subsequent material published by the ET and its trade union supporters.

Excerpt from a Letter from Oakland, October 1982

The abdication of political/economic struggle in the unions is not a byproduct of purges in our assessment. Even purged caucuses could play much more of an interventionist role. As hard as it is to believe, the evidence for us is overwhelming that Foster/Robertson have written off the unions. Why? None of our theories/explanations satisfies us completely. Closest is probably fear of dissent from tu'ers, even if it cancels the perspective of basing the SL solidly in the working class...

In practice the caucuses have virtually abandoned the struggle to build a new leadership in the unions. For example, south coast LI had recently decided not to fight the bureaucratic removal of a caucus steward. Only the fear of a split in the caucus led to a reversal of this decision. Transitional demands are being discarded in favor of mini-maxi formulations. An alarming example of this is the recent south coast LI fraction's election leaflet in which they completely dropped from the caucus program the maximum transitional demand for a workers party to expropriate key industries and establish a workers government.

Caucus programs and interventions are increasingly formalistic; agitational campaigns utilizing united front tactics have been virtually abandoned; the caucus' public posture is one of sterile witnessing or sectarian calls to action under SL leadership -- achieving little except to supply WV copy...

Despite the literary orthodoxy reflected in WV, the SL leadership in practice shows a growing tendency to dismiss the potential of the trade unions as powerful vehicles for workers struggles. This tendency must be opposed or it will lead the SL to abdicate the struggle within the trade unions to the reformists.

Excerpt from Militant Longshoreman, No. 5 (4 February 1983)
Published by Howard Keylor in ILWU Local 10

I had hoped Stan would think about what I'd said last month. Instead, he defended the new policies being pursued by the Militant Caucus and criticized his own fighting instincts. As I said, the Militant Caucus in Local 6 is largely pursuing extra-union issues and is paying less and less attention to union problems. Apparently discouraged by the near paralysis of Local 6, the constant giveaways engineered by the leadership (the last Master Contract included a 6-month wage freeze), and the inability of the membership so far to organize to halt these sellouts, the Caucus is turning its attention elsewhere, largely abandoning workers who are still employed and in the union...Downgrading the fact that the most effective opposition to the native fascists in the 1930s and to Roosevelt's war drive which brought the U.S. into World War II came from within unions led by class-struggle Trotskyist militants centred in the Teamsters in Minneapolis, the Caucus and their co-thinkers in Workers Vanguard are increasingly directing their organizing activity away from the unions and towards the unemployed, particularly in the ghettos...

Rather than openly stating their reorientation and defending it politically, they are trying to camouflage it by extending their correct historic opposition to the union bureaucracy into a blanket condemnation of the union...Stan now says that the union is so rotten that he's just running for Caucus and Convention to expose Herman and the Caucus delegates rather than trying to win sections of the coast delegates over to a fighting program.

Excerpt from -- "STOP THE LIQUIDATION OF THE TRADE UNION WORK!"...
(25 June 1983)

The resignation of the SL-supported Militant Action Caucus stewards in Los Angeles and the Bay Area represents a qualitative shift away from the SL/US' orientation towards the organized working class. There is a straight line from giving up on the fighting capacity of the organized workers, to flying during the PATCO strike despite the picket lines, to liquidating the trade union caucuses. The SL leadership is surrendering the Leninist/Trotskyist position of fighting within the reactionary-led trade unions for revolutionary leadership...The union-centred caucuses, based on recruiting workers to build an alternative leadership in the unions, are being transformed. The primary orientation of the remaining shells will be directed away from the unions. Trade union work will be continued, but only to provide an economic base for the SL and an occasional orthodox veneer for its leadership.

The authority that the SL cadre in LI, T1, T2, II and BI accumulated through years of sweat, blood and persecution is being pissed away overnight; the SL leadership knows that the effects of this liquidation are nearly irreversible.