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# **SPARTACIST LEAGUE**

## **INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION BULLETIN**

# **Split in the German Trotskyist Youth Group, Spartacus**

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INTRODUCTION

The three-way split in the Spartacus-KJO (KJO: Communist Youth Organization) grouping in West Germany in December 1971, should be of serious interest to all Trotskyists dedicated to the reconstruction of the Fourth International. The strategic importance of a strong German section in the construction of the International need not be restated here at length. Therefore the Spartacist League of the US has translated and is publishing characteristic public documents written by the participants following the December split in order to facilitate the understanding of the German split by the SL/US membership as well as by others in the world movement, especially supporters and sympathizers of the international Spartacist tendency. Appended to the documents are the interim assessment of the split by the SL/US Political Bureau and a report by a Spartacist League observer at the National Conference of Spartacus-Bolsheviks-Leninists. We hope that the publication of this material and the political discussion resulting from it may serve as a step on the road to the political clarification necessary for the reconstruction of the Fourth International, the world party of proletarian revolution.

I. The IKD: Methodology and the KJO

The core leadership of the Spartacus-KJO grouping was the IKD (International Communists of Germany). In 1969, when the mass German student movement, SDS (Socialist German Student League), split into anti-authoritarian and pro-Moscow wings, the IKD, which then was a tendency within the German section of the United Secretariat, (GIM: International Marxist Group), initiated the construction of a communist youth organization by launching the publication of the journal Spartacus. At this time, the IKD was moving away from the U.Sec. and definitively split from it with the publication of the document "Marxism or Empirio-Dogmatism" in late August, 1970. (A part of the earlier documentation, the U.Sec.'s open letter to the IKD and the IKD reply have already been published in the Socialist Workers Party's International Information Bulletin No. 3, May 1970.)

In November, 1970, the IKD, along with the SL/US, the SL/New Zealand, and the Revolutionary Communist League of England distributed a joint leaflet to the Brussels conference sponsored by the U.Sec., which attacked the U.Sec. for the following points: (1) Calling a conference which could not be a step in the building of an International since the call was not based on a Bolshevik program or the Bolshevik concept of the party, or the construction of the Fourth International, (2) the U.Sec. policy of entrism in the 1950's, (3) tail-ending the student movement, (4) the ecstasies of the U.Sec. in favor of guerrilla warfare.

Although the IKD's split from the U.Sec. was a clear step to the left, the IKD remained marked by the U.Sec. in a number of ways.

First, trained in the school of Mandel, the IKD never fully broke from a theory of neo-capitalism. This position is reaffirmed in the IKD statement on the split, in which they say:

"We, on the other hand, feel that capitalism has continuously expanded its productive capacity since 1945 and that a series of qualitatively new achievements have occurred (e.g., atomic energy, cybernetics, automation). In this connection, this suffices to make clear that we consider a mechanical application of comrade Trotsky's 1938 statements as completely unMarxist." (see document 1).

Second, a number of positions of the IKD, especially concerning work among the youth, were formulated in opposition to the U.Sec., but without a clear understanding of the basic theoretical issues in question. This led to an elaborate theoretical structure in order to provide a theoretical rationalization for the essentially empirical move away from the U.Sec. Thus the IKD--as well as Spartacus/BL, which emerged from the December split--indulged in lengthy and elaborate theorizing, the goal of which appears to be to derive the most minute tactical decision directly from the most general propositions of Marxist theory. In practice, this leads to endless theoretical haggling in which the question of practice never quite surfaces.

In addition to neo-capitalism, the IKD took over from the U.Sec. the central element of the German form of Pabloism, namely that the SPD "has transformed itself from a reformist workers' party to a completely bourgeois party, comparable to the Democrats in the USA" (Spartacus-KJO platform). The characterisation of the SPD as a bourgeois party is central to German Pabloism because it led the IKD, like the U.Sec., to seek the main revolutionary force somewhere other than in the working class. For if the SPD is bourgeois, then the bourgeoisie unambiguously controls the union bureaucracy and whatever verbal efforts may be undertaken to mount struggles within the unions, they sooner or later become abstract and are given up. This indeed seems to have happened to the IKD after the December split.

One of the main contradictions of the IKD (one which is still shared by Spartacus/BL) is that the IKD broke from the concrete policies of the German U.Sec. group without fully breaking theoretically from the mainstay of German Pabloism. In its search for non-working class revolutionary agent(s), the U.Sec. has come to a theory which is frequently (in Europe, at least) baptised the "dialectic of the sectors of intervention." What this "theory" boils down to is that, having given up on the working class, U.Sec. groups search out any and all other groups as "elements" of a new vanguard in which they can intervene: women, youth, blacks, students, etc. Through this intervention, "dialectically," a working class revolutionary party will be formed.

The IKD rejected a pluralism of "sectors of intervention" only to concentrate on one sector: working youth ("Arbeiterjugend"--see glossary at end). Very briefly, the IKD position on working youth can be summarized as follows. The German working class movement was destroyed by Fascism, and older workers are either disillusioned or cynical and cannot be won to revolutionary consciousness. Given the discontinuity of the German working-class movement, only the younger workers are open to revolutionary ideas. Therefore, the

KJO (Communist Youth Organization) movement becomes a strategic moment in the birth process of a new revolutionary class leadership. Although the IKD claimed that this was part of a dialectical process, it was a peculiarly static dialectic: "KJO-Spartacus and the IKD both constitute moments of equal value in the construction of the future Bolshevik cadre party" (from the IKD brochure "On the Conception of the Bolshevik Party"). In the KJO program, the relationship between the revolutionary class leadership, i.e., the leadership of the class as a whole, and the leadership of the working youth was left in total ambiguity:

"The communist organization which is built up through the struggles of proletarian youth can, however, only be a communist youth organization. It must determine and fulfill its tasks in view of the construction of the Party, but it itself does not yet constitute that Party. The communist Party, as the organized vanguard of the fighting working class, can be formed only through struggles which are carried out by the movement of the entire proletariat.

The communist youth organization must in practice grapple with the construction of new class leadership. It does this primarily insofar as it develops itself into the leadership of fighting working youth.

This analysis sets up the tasks of the communist youth organization. They go beyond the traditional tasks of communist youth groups which were conceived as mass organizations because they were supposed to gain and maintain the influence of the already existing Party among youth.

Today, on the other hand, the communist youth organization must already take over tasks of the Party; it must in fact become the actual leadership in the struggles of working youth.

To the extent that the movement of working youth fuses with the struggle of other parts of the class and dissolves into the broader movement of the proletariat, the communist youth organization will be placed before tasks that it can fulfill only if it bursts its own limits and as far as possible proceeds to the immediate formation of the communist Party." (KJO platform)

Thus the IKD did not claim to represent the class, and the KJO could do so only in the course of a long struggle whose goal was to anchor cadre in the class. This poses two further problems, which were central to the split in Spartacus-KJO: (1) what exactly did the IKD claim to represent? and (2) by what methods and with what program could cadre be anchored in the class and the whole class represented?

The IKD considered itself an adult, Trotskyist cadre group with a communist program which intervened as a disciplined faction in the Spartacus-KJO. International contacting and theoretical work

were seen as the particular fields of IKD responsibility, while the Spartacus-KJO was to intervene in the only stratum of the class which, according to the IKD-KJO theory, was accessible to revolutionary propaganda, the working youth. Here, the task of the IKD was to prevent the growth of youth syndicalism as well as to interject a mature theoretical and internationalist outlook:

"The KJO-Spartacus and the IKD both constitute moments of equal value in the construction of the future Bolshevik cadre party. Working from different practical arenas they form a dialectical unity and correct each other mutually. In this process Spartacus is accorded chiefly the task of building a base in the masses and a concrete united-front politics; the IKD is to work fractionally and correctively in the Spartacus-KJO and to create theoretical unity (developing the platform into a program), as well as to do the international work. Only both organizations together can guarantee that the passing struggles of the day are always tied to the perspective of (world) revolution. The functional separation is necessary because today neither of the two organizations can in and of itself realize the cadre principle since the discrepancy between work which is concretely possible in working youth and the full program of the revolution is still extraordinarily large. Each organization will, left to itself, degenerate if it is not corrected by the work of the other (rotten propagandism on the one hand; youth syndicalism on the other)."

Despite the assertion that the full cadre principle could not be realized, the KJO as well as the IKD had some of the democratic centralist forms of a cadre organization, with the conspicuous and crucial exception that the IKD also had a menshevik "freedom of criticism" clause. While factional rights were allowed for minorities, the majority of the Spartacus-KJO was explicitly constituted as an IKD-run faction. However, the IKD hegemony in the KJO was not justified on the basis of a particular party task of the IKD. This was one of the questions involved in the split, since the minority demanded that the IKD justify its faction on the basis of a platform, something the IKD steadfastly refused to do. When, in the statement on the split reprinted here, the IKD states that "in the functional separation [of the two organizations] both dangers [i.e., rotten propagandism and youth syndicalism] exist for both organizations," the IKD completely undercuts its own original justification for the separation. Their conclusion that they have to intervene to prevent theoretical degeneration in any and all directions then constitutes simply a claim to superior wisdom.

Given the contradictory character of the IKD conception of intervention in the class, it was almost inevitable that the tactics of intervention would be hotly disputed. The IKD believed that the KJO platform embodied the only demands that could be raised at this point in the class struggle, and felt that the Transitional Program was applicable only in a pre-civil war situation.

A crisis arose over the approach to the campaign around the BVG (Betriebsverfassungsgesetz: Plant Organization Law). Presented by the

government as a step toward "co-management" of industry by workers and capitalists, this law was essentially a first step toward stripping unions of their power, and ultimately destroying them. Spartacus-KJO campaigned against the law not on the basis of the Transitional Program, but on the basis of the reactionary character of the law per se. The campaign was directed not merely toward young workers, but was an attempt at intervention in the class struggle of the whole proletariat, carried out through thousands of leaflets distributed at factory gates. Spartacus-KJO was unable to spark resistance to the law in the working class through their campaign from without, and the new BVG law was passed in October of 1971 without a hitch, and with the full support of the DGB (German Trade Union Federation) and the SPD. The failure of the campaign helped precipitate the split, since it posed the question of whether the failure was due to insufficient work among the class as a whole, or whether the turn to the class as a whole was incorrect in general.

## II. The Bolshevik Faction (Bolfra) and Spartacus-KJO

The most important of the three factions which eventually emerged to oppose the IKD was the Bolshevik Faction (Bolfra). The Bolfra group became a distinct political current as a result of political struggle in the aftermath of the multiple splits which destroyed the German SDS in 1969. The pro-Moscow wing which emerged from SDS had a founding conference in the summer of 1971, taking the name Spartakus (with a 'k'). Spartakus is currently the largest leftwing student group in West Germany and is dominated by the recently re-legalized German Communist Party, the DKP. In the winter of 1969, the anti-authoritarian remnants of SDS exploded into an array of grouplets. In Bonn, there was a four-way split between a syndicalist grouping, a Maoist "party," a group of Korschists and a group of German language students who were independent Trotskyists. This last group became the core of the Bolfra faction, which is why Bolfra was also known as the "Bonn group." After being a study group circle (Rote Zelle-Germanistik) within SDS in 1969, the Bonn grouping founded an independent Trotskyist propaganda group with a journal, Rote Anfang (Red Beginning) early in 1970. At this point, the group had a Luxemburgist and Council Communist trend, since it sympathized with Trotsky's 1903 critique of Lenin on the Party and placed workers' councils ahead of the party. However, the group eventually overcame these limitations sufficiently to fuse with the IKD in September, 1970. While members of Spartacus-KJO, they continued to publish Rote Anfang until the end of 1970 (two more issues).

The Rote Anfang group had joined the IKD and Spartacus with political disagreements, most importantly on the Transitional Program, on Mandel's neo-capitalism, and on the Fourth International. The Bonn group rejected what they felt was the IKD's neo-capitalist position. In opposition to the IKD, they favored the use of the entire Transitional Program in propaganda rather than its restriction or even elimination. Finally, whereas the IKD had a position that the F.I. had never existed because it had never been implanted in the working class in a mass way, and therefore had to be constructed rather than reconstructed, the Bonn group tended to favor the

reconstruction of the F.I. However, since the IKD operated in Spartacus-KJO as a disciplined faction, members of the Bonn group could not express their differences within Spartacus-KJO. This was particularly crippling as Spartacus was on the order of 5 to 10 times as large as the IKD. In order to gain freedom of action, therefore, the Bonn comrades resigned from the IKD before the founding conference of Spartacus and presented minority positions at that conference (28 Feb. 1971) on the Transitional Program and in favor of the slogan of workers' control.

During the summer of 1971, the Bonn group formed a tendency, primarily as a result of their opposition to the method of Spartacus intervention in the struggle against the BVG (see above). In addition, there were polemics on the character of the epoch (and the applicability of the Transitional Program), the question of work within the army, and the mode of intervention of working youth in the factory councils.

Whereas the IKD favored pan-union low-level groupings largely around special questions concerning young workers, the Bonn group argued for a more generalized intervention in the class as a whole, and more active trade union work.

After the defeat of the minority on the BVG question, the Bonn Tendency was reformed in July 1971 as the Bolshevik Faction, or Bolfra. This change indicated their determination to struggle for the leadership of Spartacus-KJO, and not merely to criticize the tactics of the leadership. At this point, however, Bolfra was far from having a coherent critique of the IKD. Although it opposed the IKD on certain central issues, Bolfra had not broken with a number of other IKD conceptions. Bolfra shared (and Spartacus/BL still shares) the IKD notion that the SPD is a bourgeois party, comparable to the Democratic Party in the U.S. In practice, Bolfra's call for a turn to the working class tended both toward economism and toward lack of any Transitional Demands, even though Bolfra verbally insisted on the necessity of operating with a full Transitional Program. This tendency has persisted through the first few issues of the paper Spartacus/BL. Further, many of Bolfra's polemics with the IKD shared the IKD's tendency to over-theorizing and to the underlying idea that all tactics must be immediately derived from the corpus of Marxist theory at great length. Finally, Bolfra still accepted the IKD's Menshevik position on freedom of criticism.

It was only starting in November 1971, that Bolfra began to gain significant strength. Just before the Spartacus-KJO conference (10-11 Dec. 1971), there were parallel minority splits both in the IKD and in the IKD-loyalist Central Leadership of Spartacus-KJO. These splits solidified around G. Kanthak in Berlin, and formed the core of the GPI(T) (International Proletarian Group (Trotskyist)). This group issued the third document reprinted here in February 1972, and most of them have eventually joined Spartacus/BL.

In late November, the Communist Faction (Comfra) was formed. This group was originally sympathetic to Kanthak, but decided to stay and struggle within Spartacus-KJO. At the National Conference of Spartacus-KJO in December, Comfra and Bolfra joined in opposition

to the positions of the IKD. The joint resolution of Bolfra-Comfra carried at the conference by 1 vote. After the vote was taken, the IKD-KJO supporters walked out of the hall, announcing that they would continue to call themselves Spartacus-KJO and to publish Spartacus. After the departure of the IKD, Bolfra and Comfra passed a resolution renaming the organization Spartacus/Bolsheviks-Leninists. Their joint resolution which had defeated the IKD resolution called for serious work in the factories, and for a turn to the class as a whole, in opposition to the IKD's conception of independent, pan-union youth groups organized around special youth questions. Bolfra and Comfra admitted to a certain uncertainty concerning the concrete program and forms of this work, however: "It will be necessary to determine the concrete forms of oppositional trade union work and of the anti-bureaucratic struggle in the framework of a trade union action program" (joint resolution, 10 Dec. 1971). In addition, the joint resolution repeated the "freedom of criticism" clause, stating explicitly that in the phrase "freedom of criticism--unity of action," "propaganda does not come under unity of action. The minority must be able to express its position in pamphlets, documents (with comments from the leadership) and in the paper Spartacus."

We are publishing below two split statements by the IKD, which for the first time take an unambiguous position on the Transitional Program, neo-capitalism, etc., and excerpts from the programmatic statement issued by Spartacus/BL in the first issues of their Spartacus after the split. In addition, we include the statement by the GPI (T) proposing fusion with Spartacus/BL.

In the face of the split in Spartacus-KJO, but lacking sufficient documentation on the positions and practices of both IKD/Spartacus and Spartacus/BL following the split, the Political Bureau of Spartacist/US issued a provisional assessment of the situation in March 1972, which is also included.

Finally, after a period of organizational consolidation, Spartacus/BL held a National Conference at the end of July 1972 to which the Spartacist League/US was invited as an observer. We are appending a slightly edited version of the report of a Spartacist League observer.

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Following is a brief glossary which attempts to explain some of the terms which may be somewhat obscure or confusing to English readers.

BVG ("Betriebsverfassungsgesetz"--Plant Organization Law). This law regulates the rights of workers in industrial plants, sets up provisions for the "Betriebsraete" (plant councils) and the like. Passed in 1952, it is less progressive than the 1920 law--workers' representatives on these councils are forced to keep silent to workers on deliberations, etc. An even more reactionary version was passed this year, which in fact aims at emasculating the union movement.

Central Leadership--The IKD does not have a Central Committee structure (nor did Bolfra or Spartacus/BL until their National Conference of July 1972). Instead a "central leadership" was elected based on regional representation.

down-grading ("entqualifizierung")--The process by which apprentices or other workers who have acquired certain skills are systematically shunted into lower job categories (hence taking a cut in pay). Both groups see this as one of the main features of post-war capitalism.

Independent Union Youth Sections (EGJS-Eigenständig Gewerkschaftlichenjugendsektor)--These were groups of young unionists and workers who were organized across union lines as pressure groups on the unions and with "special" demands suited to youth. Although they never worked out too well, they tended to a separate existence and hence to dual unionism.

mediation ("Vermittlung")--A term taken over from the Hegelian vocabulary. It refers to a term or a process which provides the dialectical transition from one stage of consciousness or organization to another, higher, one. It is also used to refer to the process of intersection between revolutionary groups and the working class.

working youth (Arbeiterjugend)--These are young workers and not simply working-class youth. They are largely separable from other workers because of the highly developed apprentice structure which predominates in German industry. However, since the IKD stresses that they are youth as much, if not more, than that they are young workers, "working youth" is more accurate than either simply "young workers" or "working-class youth," even though it is somewhat awkward.

-- SL National Office  
17 August 1972

## SPLIT!

### Statement of the Central Leadership of the Communist Youth Organization SPARTACUS

(from Spartacus-KJO No.25, Jan. 1972)

After a freely taken decision we have joined together to fight the enemy and so as not to end up in the neighboring swamp (of economism), the inhabitants of which have scolded us from the beginning for having formed a particular group and for having chosen the path of struggle and not that of reconciliation. . . . You have the freedom to proceed where you will, even into the swamp; we even think that your true place is in the swamp and are prepared, within the limits of our forces, to assist you in moving into it. But leave our hands free, don't yell at us and soil the great word freedom (of criticism), for we too have the "freedom" to proceed where we will, the freedom, not only of fighting against the swamp, but also against those who turn toward the swamp!

--Lenin

It is of the essence of an organization built on the principles of democratic centralism that factions can be formed in it. The different opinions which arise within the organization, whether over questions of strategy and tactics or even over only inner-organizational problems, may, in the course of time, crystallize into specific tendencies and ultimately lead to the formation of factions. For the SPARTACUS organization, which does not merely pay lip service to the principles of bolshevik organizational forms, this is self-evident. The two factions which were formed in our organization recently were not the first and will surely not be the last.

Yet the existence of factions in an organization is possible only as long as they carry out their debates within the framework of the political platform on which the work of the organization is based. In other words, tendencies and factions can coexist in a political organization only when the political bases of the organization are recognized and accepted by all. This is the necessary precondition for any political work. In a bolshevik organization, a politico-political turn in the theoretical bases is possible only when it is carried out by all the members united. Things are different when factions are formed in an organization which call the political program itself of the organization into question. Then we are no longer dealing with a faction which seeks to make its particular factional standpoint prevail within the organization's programmatic bases but rather with the first beginnings of a completely different political orientation, which ultimately can find its logical outcome only in the formation of a different organization.

#### The "Bolshevik Faction (Bolfra)" . . .

During the summer [of 1971--trans.] the group of comrades which had already emerged as the minority tendency at the founding conference constituted itself as the "Bolshevik Faction" within the organization. This faction emerged not from an immanent critique of the political positions of our organization but from the search for an answer to the question of the status of the "fundamental character of our epoch." Certainly a worthy task for Marxists, but one which, since it can furnish no immediate answers to the concrete political tasks to be tackled, must necessarily lose sight of the perspectives for concrete work.

The result at which our comrades arrived in their theoretical work was the claim, long taken as good coin by the "Lambertist" tendency within the world Trotskyist movement, that productive forces are no longer growing and therefore that imperialism has entered its "decaying phase." And thereby they assert plainly and simply that between 1914 and 1970 there have been no qualitative changes within the overall imperialist world system and that the entire development of the postwar period represents nothing but a long-term conjunctural exception to "normal" imperialism: a temporary suspension of the essential outward forms in which it manifests itself, so to speak.

But such a position also simultaneously contains a series of political consequences. If it is true that productive forces have ceased to grow, then this also means that the bourgeoisie has no manoeuvring room left in which to make any concessions at all--not economic and certainly not political ones--to the working class. On the contrary: it can realize its profits only insofar as it turns to a permanent attack against the material and thus also against the political gains of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie can carry out this offensive only if it is unified and centralized as a class, that is, through the action of its state! Under such conditions, the proletariat can stand only on the defensive, that is, for the defense of its material conditions of existence. The working class can be successful in this only if it too closes ranks as a class--and that means: if it meets the offensive politically.

It was just these conditions which Trotsky took as his starting point in formulating the "Transitional Program" at the end of the 30's: the working class can protect its elementary economic interests only by turning them into a struggle for revolutionary transitional demands. The material conditions of the masses of workers can be defended only through the slogans of workers' control, of a sliding scale of hours and wages, and finally, of workers' government! Under these conditions, the task of communists is to intervene directly in economic struggles with such a "system of transitional demands" and in that way to transform themselves into the revolutionary leadership of the working class--into the communist party.

We on the other hand feel that capitalism has continuously expanded its productive capacity since 1945 and has achieved a number of qualitatively new gains (e.g., atomic energy, cybernetics, automation). This suffices to make it clear that we consider a mechanical application of Comrade Trotsky's statements of 1938 to be completely unmarxist.

Hence we were from the beginning concerned to clarify to what extent this problem, posed on a totally abstract level by "Bolfra," could be mediated into our concrete political work. From the very beginning, therefore, we asked the question: what political consequences Bolfra would finally draw from their scholasticisms concerning the "basic character of the epoch." Repeatedly we asked them whether their theoretical conclusions would not necessarily lead to a strategic reorientation, or whether the perspective of the Communist Youth Organization as a strategic moment in the construction of the Party was correct now as before?! This question completely surprised the comrades. Now they were forced to bring their conceptions of the situation of class struggle at the end of the 30's to bear on concrete present actuality. They saw themselves forced to come down to earth from the clouds of abstraction and to offer our organization a concrete political perspective.

In this attempt, the comrades took the shortest path. To prove

the omnipresent decay of imperialism and its immediately impending collapse, that is, to turn the year 1938 into the present, they diligently collected statistics on strike-days, numbers of unemployed, the difficulties of West German capital in disposing of its goods in recent months, etc. Dates and facts which might call their firmly established thesis into question--for example the overcoming of these difficulties through expansion of trade with the East European states and the People's Republic of China as well as with underdeveloped capitalist countries, or state intervention in economic developments through manipulation of the discount rate and minimum reserve requirements--were rejected out of hand. These piles of one-sided and completely unanalyzed facts were supposed to reestablish the present-day relevance of the "Transitional Program." But this venture revealed too many inconsistencies, too many obvious holes, we might even say giant craters. The accumulated facts were as yet insufficient to justify taking the daring step of drawing the only logical strategic conclusion from the generally, abstractly derived knowledge about the character of the epoch: the liquidation of the KJO [Communist Youth Organization] perspective and the derivation of a trade union and party program directly from the statements of the "Transitional Program." This occurred only later, at the second national conference of our organization. Formally "Bolfra" adhered to the KJO Perspective for lack of certainty and courage; in the meantime they preferred the warmth of the nest, utilizing our already existing organization for their subterranean digging and delving.

#### . . . The Liquidationist Faction . . .

Two weeks before the National Conference, then, a group of comrades attacked the problem raised by "Bolfra" in a more consistent way. Having investigated the effects of automation, they came to the conclusion that this was affecting not merely working youth but also the entire working class even now. Therefore they thought they had to overturn the KJO conception at once. Yet they had completely forgotten, or perhaps never realized, that our organization has never denied that down-grading as the result of automation and mechanization in the long run affects the entire class. But what is central is that at the present time this tendency affects only working youth in such a way that a struggle against it can and must be conducted as a political one (see Theses on Reorientation). These comrades had as yet given no thought to the problem of how the effects of automation would actually make possible the development of political struggles for the "class as a whole." Their concrete analysis was thus completely lacking in any mediation which would lead to the political work to be undertaken; it therefore necessarily dissolved into clouds of abstraction. And since no concrete political perspective was to be found in these clouds in which they had enshrouded the tendency toward down-grading, they made use of an economic analysis drawn from a book by Elmar Altvater which had appeared in 1970. There they found a few platitudes, to the effect that the "reconstruction period" is over, that West German capitalists are having difficulties in the process of the realization of capital and that increasingly sharp economic struggles have occurred in the last four years. All this disturbed the comrades so much that they came to the conclusion that the KJO conception was not only outdated but had been wrong from the beginning. Thus the knowledge and collective experience we had worked out in the last three years, not only in our concrete political work but also in debates with other political organizations, were thrown overboard overnight. What "Bolfra" had not yet dared was expressed clearly and unmistakably here: the conception of the KJO must be

liquidated, the work of the communist vanguard must even now embrace the "entire working class." How and with what program? --Oh, that we can mull over for a while, discuss it for several months for a start.

It was against this background that the second National Conference of KJO-SPARTACUS took place on 11/12 December 1971.

. . . And the Liquidation of the KJO

Accordingly the unprejudiced spectator at the conference would have expected that there would first be a common effort by "Bolfra" and the majority of the organization against the open liquidationists.

But the political character of the two factions, described above, made finding common ground for the factional positions relatively easy. Granted, there seemed to be no complete area of agreement between them, since one was not yet prepared to explicitly abandon the KJO conception while the other had not yet cosied up to the scholasticisms about the "fundamental character."

Nevertheless they already had in common the evaluation of the character of present and immediately impending economic confrontations between the working class and the capitalist class. That they had arrived at this position from different theoretical starting points and that from that fact a series of important differences could result --this was neither considered nor discussed, since what was important with this conception as background was to get rid of the KJO conception. Only then would it be possible to discuss unhindered political action within the ranks of the "class as a whole" . . .

After the secret and the declared liquidationists had shaken hands over the freshly dug grave of the KJO conception, the inevitability of a split stood out clearly for those of us who considered this conception to be as vital as ever. Now the only question was to set forth openly the "principled" basis of this split, something "Bolfra" was forced into doing only through the presentation of our own Theses on Reorientation.

Thus the two groupings finally presented a joint "Resolution on the Transformation of the Organization." In this they no longer spoke of "KJO-SPARTACUS" but only of "SPARTACUS." As opposed to the "Resolution on the Orientation of Trade Union Work in the Factory," which Bolfra had introduced shortly before, now in the joint resolution they no longer spoke of "trade union youth groups" but simply of trade union groups; trade union youth work had now become trade union work. Bolfra had made common cause with the liquidationists and --zam!--the "J" was crossed out of the "KJO" ["J" = "Jugend" (youth)--tr.].

Just as the liquidation of the KJO conception by the united bloc became a question of form, so too elementary Marxism was thrown overboard.

As could be expected, at the beginning of the joint resolution the sharpening of the economic situation is conjured up--but without the slightest statement about the extent of the crisis. Thus this conclusion assumes the character of an apocalyptic vision, which leads us to expect any and everything-- among other things such nonsense as: the attack by the bourgeoisie "on the last right that the worker still has under capitalism, the right to work." As if workers under capitalism ever had a "right" to work, and as if the reserve army of unemployed were not precisely a constitutive moment of capitalism!

Only now, when it was freed from the fetters of basic Marxist knowledge, could the block run around freely like a bull in the china shop of Marxist categories.

First the label "partial demands" was stuck onto the everyday economic interests of the workers, only to smuggle in under the same label, two pages later, revolutionary transitional demands! Economic struggles are briefly subsumed under the struggle for the sliding scale of hours--that is, nothing less than the system of the division of labor in socialist society! No wonder they can no longer distinguish the struggle for dollars and cents from the revolutionary struggle for power. . . .

Moreover, they then directly deduce strategy from an "Analysis of Imperialism," although Comrade Trotsky had already taught Stalin that one cannot simply derive strategy directly from the abstract form of capitalism and that national peculiarities could be considered only as the "warts on the face," but not as constitutive for strategy!<sup>+</sup> And then finally the "changes in strategy" proposed for the organization by the block are transformed into a "tactical turn to the class as a whole."

That, decked out in these confusions, the unprincipled bloc of hidden and open liquidationists had, in its suggestions for concrete policies, to end up in bald-faced opportunism can surely no longer amaze anyone. This becomes especially clear in the section of the "Resolution. . ." on the liquidation of the demand for independent union-youth sections [the "EGJS" or "Eigenständiger Gewerkschafts-Jugendsektor"--tr.]. First it was established, in accord with their (already demonstrated) lack of understanding for the dynamics of the struggle of working youth, that the struggle for independent union youth-sections (EGJS) did not allow for the inclusion of older union members in the antibureaucratic struggle. As an alternative to this concrete demand, an "opposition struggle" was suggested, whose "concrete form" still had to be determined "in connection with the necessary turn to the class as a whole." Here we can see that the liquidation of the EGJS-slogan by dissolving it into a mystique of the "class as a whole" necessarily leads to the practical liquidation of the anti-bureaucratic perspective itself. In place of the anti-bureaucratic struggle, "central trade union groups" are postulated, the basis of which is obviously not to be a communist program for the entire trade union movement--and in the last analysis that means: the struggle for a workers' government!--but rather a least common denominator, that is, a purely "union" label, under which the communists can hide among all the various oppositional tendencies within the trade unions, right up to the dissatisfied bureaucrats. . . .

All in all, the "Resolution on the Transformation of the Organization" presents the perspective "of contributing to the expansion of limited economic struggles into general political struggles and, by way of this intervention, carrying forward the construction of the communist party." Thereby Bolfra drew the logical conclusions from their inconsistent political position: it no longer stood on the basis of the KJO. Since the proponents of the "Theses on the Reorientation" [i.e., the IKD--tr.] now stood face to face with the united bloc of liquidationists, precisely that situation had emerged which, as we said at the beginning, made it impossible to carry on the debate on a factional level: the discussion could no longer be conducted in the framework of the political program of KJO-SPARTACUS. Therefore the practico-political turn in our theoretical foundations was in fact binding only on that part of the organization which now as before held firm to maintaining the KJO perspective. For the

<sup>+</sup>The sentence appears illogical, but this is what the IKD wrote.--tr.

liquidationists, the SPARTACUS-platform could no longer be binding for political work. In such a situation, only the splitting of the organization is possible. The question of the continuity of the organization can no longer be decided according to the majority of the votes; rather it has become a political question.

### Split and Consolidation

The block of liquidationists constituted itself as "Spartacus-Bolshevik-Leninist" shortly after the split. The positions subscribed to by this organization up to now have only confirmed our conceptions as presented in the Theses. Their lack of understanding regarding the central problems of the concrete mediation between the objective immediate relevance of the Revolution and the crisis of proletarian leadership--generally speaking--and therefore their answer to the question of the dialectic between the vanguard and the masses, which remains entangled in abstractions, define for the organization an as a whole purely propagandistic perspective--the perspective of a Trotskyist-oriented propaganda circle!

Already we can distinguish different tendencies in the new organization. Though still united in the face of the difficulty generally characteristic of such propaganda circles, namely the inability to point out a concrete perspective for building a party, the organization will fall apart precisely over this difficulty. The individual tendencies which were able to unify around the liquidation of the KJO conception will probably disintegrate as quickly as they were able to unite.

Our contribution, however, consists precisely in not having dissolved the problem of building the party into the abstraction of the entire social totality but rather in having shown, via the KJO conception, a way in which propaganda does not have to remain abstract in West Germany even today but rather can pass over into the leadership of political struggles, into the real dialectic of vanguard and masses. Today a communist is not someone who has abstractly grasped the general laws of capitalist development and the relationship of political and economic struggle. What is central to our conception [of the KJO--tr.]--and here the comrades of the bloc have until now not been forthcoming with an alternative--is that we do not stop at understanding the general laws of development abstractly but also analyze the nature and manner of their realization. And here we have come to the conclusion that working youth are immediately affected by down-grading in a particular manner which renders possible in this area what is not possible today at the level of the class as a whole: the construction of the revolutionary vanguard organization, that is: of the KJO!

The following theses<sup>+</sup> were presented for a vote by the delegates who represented the KJO at the second national conference of our organization in opposition to the joint resolution of the liquidationist factions. They contain a summary of the materialist basis for the KJO perspective and at the same time show the concrete tasks to be tackled in the next period. They present a self-criticism of the errors our organization has made; errors which not least of all made possible the formation of the above-mentioned factions.

Only through concretely taking up the tasks set forth in the theses can our organization set itself off as a political alternative to the sect- and circle-existence of the left in West Germany.

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<sup>+</sup>I.e., "It is time to see clearly again"--tr.

STATEMENT OF THE LEADERSHIP OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNISTS OF GERMANY ON THE SPLIT OF THE  
COMMUNIST YOUTH ORGANIZATION-SPARTACUS

(from Spartacus-KJO 26, February 1972)

When differences within a political organization cannot be eliminated in discussion and common practice over a lengthy span of time but instead the factional dispute assumes an ever sharper and more irreconcilable character, then at some time comes the point at which an organizational unity of the positions is no longer possible and a split of the organization becomes unavoidable. For SPARTACUS this point was reached at the second National Conference in December of last year [1971], when several factional groupings had taken shape and had united in an otherwise completely unprincipled bloc with the goal of liquidating the KJO (see "Spartacus" 25) [= immediately preceding text--tr.].

Of course to say that the split of SPARTACUS was unavoidable at this time does not mean that this was truly and absolutely so. The fact that such a liquidationist tendency was able to take shape at all in SPARTACUS and could develop into a serious danger for the organization itself requires explanation which can be found only in the political leadership of the organization. The development of factions always entails the danger of a split. Naturally, free discussion in a revolutionary organization is inconceivable without the right to form factions. Nonetheless factions are always bad news, and the art of political leadership consists precisely in not allowing them to come into existence or, as the case may be, in pulling the political rug out from under them by accepting whatever is correct in their criticism of the organization but fighting decisively and uncompromisingly whatever is false. Only in this way can a faction either be driven out of existence and the inner unity of the organization be restored anew but on a higher level of clarity or, on the other hand, can the core of the faction be unmasked as openly inimical to the organization and isolated from its adherents, so that an organizational break, when it finally becomes necessary, does not signify a serious weakening of the organization.

#### The Attitude of the IKD in the Factional Dispute

The responsibility for the split of SPARTACUS' having ultimately assumed such unexpectedly large dimensions<sup>1</sup> lies not least of all in our failure to take seriously the Bonn grouping which later, expanded into "Bolfra," formed the essential core of the liquidationist tendency. What would have been necessary, and at an early point in time, was a decisive struggle against this tendency. In retrospect it appears inevitable that the Bonn tendency, in view of its initial conception of the "basic character of the epoch" (cf. "Spartacus" 25), should end by liquidating the KJO conception as a whole.

But since for months the Bonn "basic-character" metaphysics seemed to be producing no concrete political conclusions, we at first failed to analyze the ultimate thrust of their position--as did the members of the faction themselves! This omission was partly due to an unconscious, slightly opportunistic desire not to subject the painfully attained cohesiveness of the young SPARTACUS organization to the test of a premature factional struggle. For several months we therefore assumed a wait-and-see attitude which was, moreover, strengthened by the manner in which the Bonn grouping presented its positions. For every time we set about composing an answer to a paper we had received from them, we were told of the provisional nature of this contribution and consoled with thoughts of a forthcoming, "more complete"

paper, so that one could never rightly know against what position he was to marshal his arguments.

Nor did matters improve radically when the Bonn group finally decided to present their own positions on concrete tactical questions. For since their metaphysical methodology consists (and consisted) in deriving practical/tactical conclusions directly from the most general and abstract statements and without any concrete mediation, they were proof against any concrete critique, i.e., one which argued dialectically. If one attempted to expose the inconsistencies of their tactical suggestions, they quickly retreated into their "basic-character" mysticism, and if one attempted to get at them in this fortified position, they hastily hid in micro-tactical and inner-organizational trifles. Arguing with them was like trying to fence in an all-concealing fog.

Since in addition the practical openings for SPARTACUS, which had never been very great, had been temporarily even further restricted--cf. the "Theses on Reorientation"--the touchstone of practice, against which all controversial positions must demonstrate their merit, had also to a large extent disappeared.

Many tactical and strategic questions appear, if posed formalistically, insoluble. But they immediately stand in their correct place if one poses them dialectically, i.e., in the perspective of the living struggle of classes and parties. Revolutionary dialectics are, however, acquired best in active struggle."

--L. Trotsky, 3 Oct. 1932

Thus the factional dispute became so unclear for many comrades, especially the newer ones, that they remained on the sidelines as a non-participating audience. For many of them this confusion reached its highpoint when several comrades--among them the majority of the central leadership!--cast aside from one day to the next--and only two weeks before the second N.C.--all those principles upon which we had in three years erected the SPARTACUS organization. And they did so with the same inept arguments which we had been hearing over and over at the time from the "Marxist-Leninist" economists and cliquist theoreticians.

In this confusion it no longer mattered that this new grouping, "Comfra," was against the KJO whereas "Bolfra" pretended to be for it,<sup>2</sup> nor did the differences between the two factions over the question of the "basic character" [of the epoch] count. The only thing which still seemed to be clear was the orientation of both these groupings toward the class as a whole--and everyone who found himself unable to beat his way through the thicket of polemics and accusations thought he was being offered "more" [by them] than by us, since we were attempting forcibly to "restrict" the organization to working youth. This explains the extent of the split and also why, with a few exceptions, it was the younger comrades who lacked familiarity with the development of the organization that cast their lot with the bloc of liquidationists.

If one considers that the Bonn group had entered the organization with its "basic-character" position and had from the very outset regarded itself as a special minority, then it appears dubious whether the factional dispute with them could have had a result other than organizational separation. In any case we should have given up the illusion of clarifying the respective positions through a discussion with the Bonn group much sooner than we did. Such clarification was continually rendered impossible by the Bonners' disloyal manner of argumentation, whereby they first distorted our positions to the point

of unrecognizability or else turned them into their opposite and then criticized them with false arguments. Similarly, their total lack of concern for contradictions in their own statements is explicable only in terms of their motive of opposition at any price, as long as this would somehow serve to discredit the IKD or the previous majority of SPARTACUS. We should have ceased immanent criticism of the "basic-character" mysticism much earlier in order to combat their metaphysical method with the sole appropriate means, that of ideological criticism, a procedure which naturally would have caused the question of organizational unity to emerge that much sooner. We are convinced that the Bonn group recognized this question earlier than we did and, since the spring or at the latest the summer of 1971, had only been practising entrism in SPARTACUS, with the aim of breaking off as large a part of the organization as possible or even of pushing us and the previous majority into the minority and then removing us from the organization.

### The Causes of the Aberrant Development and the IKD

Failing to conduct the factional dispute in time and with sufficient energy constituted an elemental sin of omission, one which led to this considerable split. However our insufficient emphasis on, if not forgetfulness of, the specific tasks of the KJO as such merely furnished the prerequisite for the Bonn group's acquiring so great an influence in the organization--a prerequisite which they naturally did their utmost to help create. It is on this plane that the much weightier failure in our [the IKD's] responsibility toward SPARTACUS as an organization separate from us must be sought.

It is unnecessary to discuss here the nature of our neglect of the special tasks of SPARTACUS in the last year to year and a half. This has already been sufficiently dealt with in the "Theses on Re-orientation," which to this extent should also be regarded as a political self-criticism of the IKD. Our detailing there the dynamics which caused SPARTACUS to lose sight of its special tasks does not, however, relieve us of responsibility for what should have been our proper task: living up to our self-imposed task as permanent corrective of the KJO rather than abandoning SPARTACUS to its own inner dynamics. The intersection of two factors explains this neglect.

On the one hand the aberrant development of SPARTACUS was not the sort that we had expected and against which we were sufficiently armed. To be sure we had originally developed our rather complicated strategic conception of the functional separation of the revolutionary organization on the basis of the assumption that a unified organization would, under the conditions existing in West Germany, inevitably be faced with the alternative dead ends of rotten propagandism or youth syndicalism. But once SPARTACUS was standing on its own feet organizationally, we increasingly forgot what we had once known, namely that in this functional separation both dangers exist for both organizations. Instead we concentrated completely on preserving the SPARTACUS-organization from youth-syndicalism alone and failed to become aware in time that it was slipping to the other extreme, which found expression in the oft appealed-to "orientation to the class as a whole."

To be sure, according to our conception the IKD would guarantee that SPARTACUS did not restrict itself to the special problems of working youth and to work in this area but rather concentrated on these while seeing and carrying out this work always in the light of a broader perspective. But we always thought that we would in actuality transcend the specifically youth-oriented character of [our] practical politics, that is, that we would really succeed in incorporating a reasonably significant part of the older workers into

political struggles, and we in West Germany scarcely could--and can--count on this, so long as not even the proletarian youth can demonstrate a halfway solid tradition of political struggle. That we did not at once perceive the emptiness, the purely proclamatory character of our "transcending" the specifically youth-oriented perspective shows only too clearly how one-sidedly we conceived of our corrective function.

In close connection with this stands the second factor, namely the extensive fusing of the IKD with SPARTACUS. Naturally the IKD can in general fulfill its function vis-à-vis SPARTACUS only in centralized form. During the first phase of our existence as an independent organization the construction of SPARTACUS constituted the greater part of our centralized activity; this task devolved upon that organization itself with the creation of a SPARTACUS central-bureau in the fall of 1970 and ultimately with the founding of the SPARTACUS-organization in spring of 1971. Since in addition the lack of personnel meant that nearly all the IKD comrades had to assume leading positions on the national and regional levels in SPARTACUS, there resulted in part an organic intermixing of the work of SPARTACUS and the IKD. The central influence of the IKD occurred almost exclusively via the SPARTACUS leadership and thus the IKD leadership corrected less and less and became more and more a mere supplement to the SPARTACUS leadership. At the same time the IKD groups, which had been left on their own to a large extent, developed into mere mouthpieces of regional SPARTACUS organizations against the leadership of SPARTACUS and also of the IKD, just where the centralized corrective intervention of the IKD would have been most necessary. Thus the IKD had tended to cease to exist both as a centralized and as an independent organization, as opposed to SPARTACUS.

But fortunately only tended in that direction! To be sure, we did not succeed in preserving the unity of the KJO and in preventing its considerable weakening. But finally, when it was do or die, and the liquidationists were readying the decisive blow against the KJO, the IKD showed it was still able to recall the principles with which it had emerged and which it had acquired ever anew in years of struggle and of defending the KJO, together with other more experienced and conscious comrades of the KJO, against its liquidation. SPARTACUS has emerged from the split weakened in personnel. Viewed politically, however, this experience has doubtless been of use: "Revolutionaries are not chosen solely in strikes and street-battles but above all-- in the struggle for the correct politics of their own party." (L. Trotsky, "What next?")

What the IKD had at one time known but not taken to heart has now been visibly demonstrated to it: the IKD cannot fulfill its special tasks, indeed its whole existence is placed in question if it cannot continually preserve a critical organizational distance to SPARTACUS so as to correct at the outset all incorrect developments-- and this means aberrant developments of every kind that lead to SPARTACUS' neglecting the creation and organizing of a political movement of working youth. For this is what both rotten propagandism and youth syndicalism culminate in: whereas the latter is essentially satisfied with whatever "movement" is already in existence, the former is totally unconcerned with how this movement is to develop.

In order to fulfill its special tasks the IKD is, however, dependent on SPARTACUS' success in developing a real leadership of the political movement of working youth. To fulfill its special tasks the IKD must set about penetrating and smashing the petrified sectarian fronts of the Trotskyist world movement (which have already

begun to crumble) and must introduce a process of splits and fusions, in the course of which the core of a Fourth International truly deserving of this name will take shape. This task can be undertaken only factionally. This means that we must begin by reestablishing and developing the full Trotskyist program and by freeing it of all the dogmatic and revisionist distortions which it has undergone in the course of time.

The significant contribution of the IKD, with SPARTACUS at its side, must, however, consist in guaranteeing that the reconstruction of the program of the Fourth International does not remain merely a literary affair but instead is continually enriched by the living experience of the class struggle itself, as the ultimately decisive indicator of the rightness or wrongness of every theory. The task of the IKD is to assist SPARTACUS in the fulfillment of this function.

<sup>1</sup>Ca. 50% for SPARTACUS KJO, 30% for Spartacus-BL; the remainder fell by the wayside. (Author's note)

<sup>2</sup>They themselves have subsequently revealed these to be lies. As the main force in Spartacus-BL, Bolfra now writes in its organ (which has appeared as "Spartacus" no. 25), "The last NC of KJO-Spartacus, on 12 December 1971, decided on the Transformation of the Organization, central feature of which is to be the orientation to the working class as a whole. This entailed (!!!) the abandonment of the concept of the Communist Youth Organization, a fact which finds expression in the new name, SPARTACUS-BL (Bolsheviks-Leninists)."!!! Thus acceptance of the KJO [concept] in December was only a tactic!! But for these comrades that is not so important: even today they are still recruiting on the basis of the program of the KJO including the criterion: recognition of the KJO as strategic moment in the construction of the party.

<sup>3</sup>Anyone can convince himself of this by making the attempt to reconstruct a position even remotely resembling ours from the polemics of the comrades in their organ "Spartacus 25." We guarantee the impossibility of doing so.

## THE ORIGINS OF SPARTACUS (BL)

1. Development of the Organization down to the Split  
(from Spartacus-BL no. 25, Dec.-Jan. 1971-2)

The actual split [by the IKD], which was systematically prepared by the IKD over the last few months, has to be judged as a kind of political desertion and capitulation. It is the result of a process of political differentiation in SPARTACUS-KJO which lasted for a year and a half. In the summer of 1970 the fusion of the group "Roter Anfang" [Red Beginning] (as an independent Trotskyist tendency) with SPARTACUS opened the discussion about differences which existed from the beginning, especially on the question of the relation between political and economic struggles and the relation of the struggle of working youth to that of the class as a whole. At the national pre-conference in Dortmund on 31 October 1970, the central controversy was over the evaluation of the so-called "Transitional Program" of 1938, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International." For the first time the organization had to take a position on whether it would make the Transitional Program's essential statements concerning the characterization of the imperialist epoch the basis for revolutionary strategy in West Germany (in particular after the end of the reconstruction period): that is, whether it would concretize and apply them. To this end an exact and precise distinction had to be made between the merely conjunctural determinations of this international program and its structural statements (cf. report in Spartacus 18).

The following delegate conferences up to and including the founding conference of the KJO at a national level on 27-28 March 1971 took place under the sign of the discussion over platform and the politico-economic controversy between the then "minority tendency" and the IKD. In the debate over the conference call and the platform of the KJO, the main question was whether the platform was to be presented as mainly inductive (i.e., proceeding from the present experience of working youth) or deductive (proceeding from the objective analysis of the character of the imperialist epoch).

The minority fought to derive the role of the KJO and the necessity for its intervention mainly among working youth from the objective and subjective foundations of the current period of imperialism in West Germany. It could not approve of the IKD's empty formulas in relation to the characterization of the epoch. The rotten generality of these formulas was supposed to include both the Leninist theory of imperialism as well as the theory of neo-capitalism. But on this question, as on the question of democratic centralism, the minority was unable to prevail at the founding conference.

Since the IKD saw itself challenged on both a political and economic level without being able to give an appropriate answer, it retreated into a false modesty: it couldn't as yet lay claim to a "global conception" (we call it theory!). But on the other hand they saw themselves forced to return explicitly to Mandel's "theory" of NEO-CAPITALISM--and thus to their "Theses on the Strategy of the Working-Class Movement under Neocapitalism" (Sept. 1969), upon which they have now even more obviously fallen back. The theoretical answer of the IKD was not only void of all Marxist categories (the category of the uneven development of capitalism was left out, use-value analysis was banned from political economy, the relation of production-circulation-consumption remained unclarified, etc.); there were also corresponding basically false predictions for the present concerning the

growth of the world economy and world trade, imperialist competition and the current world conjuncture. For these comrades, capitalism after World War II had found, by means of its self-reform, a way out of the epoch, so that the alternative "Socialism or Barbarism!"--that is, objectively based catastrophes for the working-class movement--was no longer posed in its full sharpness. The minority, on the other hand, basing itself on the exact derivation of conjunctural tendencies from the structural contradictions of capitalism in the last year [sic], came to the result that the organization must do everything possible to be capable of dealing with the approaching deepening recession, [which was going to affect] West Germany as well.

The jokes the IKD comrades made about our expectation of an intensified recession, given the background of the world conjuncture and the world monetary crisis, the jokes about our demand that we prepare ourselves strategically and tactically for this, can be returned in kind today, when the actual development of all their conceptions of "Ultraimperialism" has revealed them for what they are: SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ILLUSIONS! In particular, they are now talking about the "tendency to dismantle the remnants of 'protectionism,'" about the "blunting of imperialist competition" through supranational agreements and product-diversification, about the "de facto unification of the markets of highly developed countries," about the structural blunting of the contradiction between production and consumption, about the development of a permanently rising mass consumption as a qualitatively new source of growth, about the struggle of the working class for "new needs and products to fill these," about the qualitatively new role of the state, of the sphere of circulation [of money] and much more.

Factions, according to the bolshevik concept, necessarily and in the last analysis raise the question of their social roots and of the politico-ideological influence of other classes on the proletariat (as well as of the influence of national traditions and of backward strata of the proletariat). From the IKD's rejection of this concept it then follows that they have not once sought to characterize BOLFRA politically, on the grounds that several factions could in principle lay claim to the proletarian class line, that anyone could call an opponent "petty-bourgeois" or "centrist" and that in the KJO, in spite of its claim to democratic centralism, the factions could not be judged as definitively as they could in the full-fledged party.

## THE ORIGINS OF SPARTACUS (BL)

4. Program as the Result of Historical Experience  
and Objective Necessity  
(from Spartacus-BL no. 25, Dec.-Jan. 1971-72)

The IKD comrades will never get beyond the GENERAL ORGANIZATIONAL AND TECHNICAL DEFINITION OF PARTY, PROGRAM, FACTION, TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS, UNION TACTICS, UNITED FRONT, etc. Their POSITION ON THE HISTORY OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL, which they have been withholding from the KJO for a year,<sup>+</sup> is as false as their method is empirical and their results liquidationist (cf. "The Main Stages of the Degeneration of the Fourth International"). According [to this report], the key to the degeneration of the F. I., indeed the reason for its non-existence lies exclusively in "its inability to anchor itself in real class struggles as a vanguard, a fact which has led to its organizational and programmatic dissolution." Following its break with the Third International in 1933, the Left Opposition "lost its last and never very firm link to the proletarian mass movement, to real class struggles."<sup>1</sup> But if the struggle for the international party of the proletariat can begin only after the Trotskyists have won over the vanguard of the proletariat in several countries, then Trotsky's and the Fourth International's struggle for program until the triumph of Pabloism in 1953 were also nothing but utopian idealism (as Deutscher has characterized it). The inevitable conclusion for today would then have to be that we cannot hope to REconstruct the Fourth International until a fair number of propaganda groups in several countries have succeeded in becoming vanguard parties. That means nothing other than POSTPONING the struggle for a disciplined, centralized world party with a clear program!

The IKD has completely "forgotten" the uncompromising STRUGGLE FOR PROGRAMMATIC CLARITY--something the Spartacist League has also criticized [them for]--and thus the lessons from Marx' and Engels' ideological struggle in the exile period and in the First International; the whole experience of the revolutionary working-class movement which comes from the collapse of the Second International with its federated structure; the basis for various errors of Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg down to August 1914; Lenin's call for the Third International, etc. In fact the thes[is] of the IKD that the STRUGGLE FOR PROGRAMMATIC CLARITY IS PURELY LITERARY and that of the Revolutionary Communist League that the "Transitional Program" today finds itself "scattered into arbitrarily splintered parts in the various Trotskyist groups"--both these are denials of the unity of theory and practice, the basis of the materialist dialectic. When the IKD explains the destruction of the F.I. exclusively by its lack of class implantation, they ignore with equal impartiality the Dutch (Sneevliet) and Spanish (Nin, Andrade) experiences, the capitulation of the Ceylonese LSSP after World War II and the course of the Bolivian revolution in 1953 and 1971 (cf. SPARTACUS 26). For in all these cases the Trotskyists were, after all, thoroughly anchored in the working class! All these cases render Trotsky's "Lessons of October" particularly timely: the theoretical and political struggle against liquidationist tendencies becomes increasingly necessary as strategic and tactical turns come closer, and especially as the Party approaches the revolutionary crisis.<sup>2</sup> It was precisely Trotsky's "literary" struggle and

<sup>+</sup> Translator's note: We have translated this sentence as it stands despite the seeming inconsistency with what follows: "Possibly the German typist erroneously typed "vorenthalten" (= withhold from) for "vorhalten" (= lecture on); the affected clause would then read, "which they have been lecturing the KJO on for a year."

the understanding of past errors and defeats that made possible the founding of the F.I. and the relative success of Trotskyism during and after WW II. That is, made possible the construction of three vanguard parties in Vietnam, Bolivia and Ceylon, and successful interventions in the working class in the U.S.A., France and England.

It was not out of a failure to realistically and honestly see and grasp the state of the world and the demoralization of the world proletariat that Trotsky founded the Fourth International in 1938 on the basis of the Transitional Program. It is not because Trotsky was an incorrigible optimist and a believer in progress that the Program speaks, during the war, of the new International of proletarian masses. Just the opposite: he grasped the essence of revolutionary strategy which had to be expressed through the international program and the existence of the Fourth International itself. This was Trotsky's answer to the crisis,<sup>3</sup> and in arriving at it he exactly evaluated the world situation and the historical causes of the insufficient implantation of the Fourth International.

The degeneration of the F.I. after WW II can be explained only politically. The IKD's approach to the history of the working-class movement currently leads on the one hand to compromises in carrying out the ideological-political struggle, and on the other hand in practice to capitulating to tendencies which are anchored in the proletariat: social democracy and Stalinism!

The IKD's conception of PROGRAM as "product and producer" of the real class process--a definition which in the abstract has some justification for the construction of the Party--serves as an alibi to avoid necessary concrete decisions. The aspect of preparation (both organizational and programmatic) for the further development of the organization--which is precisely not organic--is completely suppressed.<sup>4</sup> The organic character of the formation of a class program through revolutionary praxis is stressed one-sidedly--and the statement that the program exists only when the Party can EMBODY it, is unmarxist and false! The Communist Manifesto of February 1848 presents the English, French, Belgian and German proletariat with the perspective of the permanent revolution (insofar as it could be developed on the basis of competitive capitalism), although the Communist League numbered only a few hundred members. The "Transitional Program" of 1938 makes a world-historical claim, yet the F.I. had qualified cadre in some ten countries; preparations had been made for it for only a decade and directly in the previous five years.

The other case has, however, been far more frequent in the history of the workers' movement, namely the founding of a party before a full scientific program was elaborated. It is here that bourgeois philistine intellectuals initiate their attacks--this time calling into question not the program but the Party and the International. But Marx and Engels created the Communist League before they wrote the Communist Manifesto. The First International was founded before the first volume of Capital appeared, the Second International before the publication of all of Capital. The best periods of the Third International were those before it had a completed program. The IKD is blind to the immediate relevance of revolutionary tradition and theory. They sidestep Trotsky's program [both] as obligation and as obligation to criticism, as the programmatic basis of our struggles--which are by no means without presuppositions--as they would a stumbling block. They silently revise the material conditions of the epoch in which the immediate relevance of proletarian revolution is posed on a world scale. But the struggle of Leninism against right

and left opportunism can be carried out only on the basis of the "fundamental insight of the present-day relevance of revolution" in all fields of class struggle in which revolutionary as well as counter-revolutionary possibilities are to be found.<sup>5</sup> Strategy and tactics cannot be developed except in the struggle against the unprincipled zig-zags and left-opportunist phrase-mongering which derives tactics DIRECTLY from the fundamental character of the epoch.

Up till now the IKD has taken no concrete position toward the "Transitional Program" and its STRUCTURAL characterizations of imperialism.

We did not come into existence to draw up a centrist program.

Revolutionary centralism, the present-day relevance of proletarian revolution, the disunity and political divisions of the working class, the power of the bourgeoisie concentrated in the bourgeois state--these are the objective preconditions for DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM AND THE CADRE PRINCIPLE. Even though these are valid in the construction of the Party, they find their full realization only when the revolutionary party actually LEADS the struggles of the class. The path which leads there is full of reverses, breaks and leaps, the development is not spontaneous and organic. But in constructing the party, we have a case where the development must be CONSCIOUSLY driven forward, must occur in clearly conceived STAGES, none of which can be skipped. Already at the founding conference there was a deeply rooted controversy between the then minority and the IKD concerning the necessity for the conscious advancing of centralization and the shaping of the relations between the center and the locals. In March 1971 the bureaucratic federalists could still win out. The Central Leadership (CL) model which was worked out then (a seven-person committee, elected on technical criteria and resident in Berlin) could not overcome federalism. It led to unclear organizational relations: on the one hand to merely formal claims to leadership by the CL, on the other to our campaigns and actions being in fact "led" by the individual regional committees.

This organizational structure thus, instead of overcoming this state of loose leadership, then promoted the increasing isolation of the CL from the experience of the regions and locals, which no longer expected any centralization of practice and experience from the CL.

The IKD's notion of a leisurely process of constructing the Party has its organizational counterpart in their conception that the leadership will continue to grow organically until a so-called "double leadership structure" becomes necessary. But the Russian experience which they evoked, was entirely different.<sup>6</sup> Before and after the second party congress of the RSDWP Lenin developed the reasons why the greatest possible DECENTRALIZATION of locals, namely in regard to responsibility and information, was necessary to the centralization of the leadership of the revolutionary struggle.<sup>7</sup> Not only is centralization not a one-sided process, in addition it can never be the result of the organic growth of insight and responsibility. Locals must be directed toward their tasks by a truly central leadership. Only then can the locals be obligated to make a decisive contribution to the centralization of the organization.

When KJO Spartacus was founded at a NATIONAL level, that did not mean that it was already in an organizational position to lead struggles of working youth in West Germany. Only the ORGANIZATIONAL ANTICIPATION of a "national" organization as a clearly defined step of the construction of the Party could validate this political claim.

With the growth of economic struggles Spartacus was faced with the necessity--given the tendencies to down-grading in decaying monopoly capitalism--of a STRATEGIC TURN TO THE CLASS AS A WHOLE. The structure of leadership within an organization is determined by the fact that democratic centralism is defined as the centralization of actual struggles and of revolutionary experience. Only a CENTRAL COMMITTEE, whose members are elected by political criteria and as being the most capable, can fulfill this task.

Once the locals find from experience that they are making real progress in their practical work by applying the directives of the CC, then they will be more ready to promote the process of centralization in the whole organization. To the conception of a strong leadership belongs the idea that it is a UNIFIED LEADERSHIP which is responsible for the policy of the organization between national conferences. The IKD's expression "double leadership structure" falsely suggests a division of responsibility. The necessity of a Political Bureau as well as of other committees and commissions follows from the particular conditions and requirements of work in each individual case. Today, under the condition that a large part of the CC members continue to work in the various] regions, the PB must be a committee of the CC which is capable of making decisions at any and all times. In both pre- and post-revolutionary Russia the leadership was always in the hands of the CC. (We except here the conditions of illegality in the Iskra-period and the increasing bureaucratization of the CPUSSR after 1922.)

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. on the other hand, L. Trotsky, "'For' the F.I.? No! The F.I." in Writings, 1938/39, pp. 47ff.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the model of Pierre Broué in La Vérité, No. 537, April-May 1967, pp. 23-31 [tr. in Workers' Vanguard, July-August 1972].

<sup>3</sup> Trotsky, Discussion with James; "Against the Stream," Writings, 1938/39, pp. 63ff.

<sup>4</sup> Trotsky, "Letter to publisher of 'Lutte de classe,'" 11 Aug. 1929; also the answer of the IKD and KJO to the call in Jeune Révolutionnaire 21 in Spartacus 22, p. 29; "Open letter to the AJS and OCI" in Spartacus 23, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Lukács, Lenin (1924), p. 79 (German ed.).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. "On the Centralization of our Organization," Dec. 1971.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Lenin, "Letter to a comrade on our organizational tasks" (1902).

TO THE MEMBERS AND THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF  
SPARTACUS / BOLSHEVIKS-LENINISTS

(GPI Leaflet)

On the basis of internal discussion and conversation with comrades in the leadership of the Bolsheviks-Leninists (BL) regarding: (1) the political relationship between our group and Spartacus / BL group and (2) a fusion with you, we hereby offer the following statement:

We are undertaking a self-criticism for the decision, which at the time was overly hasty and false, to quit the former SPARTACUS organization before the National Conference at the beginning of December and to abandon the decisive political struggle (with the goal of a split) against the IKD-KJO tendency. As can be seen from our declaration of withdrawal, we based this step on the impossibility of arriving at an alternative comprehensive strategic conception in time for us to introduce this at the NC. This alternative would have had as starting point an evaluation of the essential structural traits of the new period in the process of capital realization and its consequences for the working class and, with an orientation toward these objective presuppositions, would have had the task of mediating between the proletariat's current level of consciousness and the strategic goal at this stage--the construction of the party. To be sure, our investigation of the reconstruction period as a specific stage of the process of the realization of capital following the Second World War and our general determination of the new stage of the process of capital realization--qualitatively different, within the framework of the imperialist epoch, from the reconstruction period--constituted a necessary but by itself inadequate condition for development of our strategic axis. However, we were incapable of mediating between the uneven and non-simultaneous outward manifestations of the structural threat to the commodity "labor-power" in specific industries and the essentially general character of that threat. Yet to do this would constitute the necessary prerequisite for an appropriate strategic position which, after all, must be able to conduct partial struggles of the workers on a local, particularized level against this structural threat in a fashion that, by means of partial demands of a transitional character, will lead these [economic] struggles over in political struggles of the [whole] working class--or of its most advanced sections, to start with. All activities of communists have to be subordinated to such a concretized strategic axis.

Even though we had not accomplished this task, our withdrawal was nonetheless incorrect, since the KJO could make no claim whatsoever to being a bolshevik organization. For it lacked the essential distinguishing characteristic of such an organization, a correct, demonstrated strategic basis which could have generated the mediation to the strategic goal of this stage.<sup>1</sup> Rather we should have carried on the fight within the KJO, recognizing it as centrist, with the goal of grouping the most advanced elements around the central task, namely the development of a strategic conception appropriate to what is required [at this stage]. With the comrades we had won over we could then have pressed forward at an accelerated pace toward the realization of this goal without, through intellectual arrogance, giving up the steps in this direction which already existed on the level of practice and that of organization. Through an overly hasty exit we abandoned this mass of comrades to themselves or, what is even worse, to the apologists of the KJO.

Given this self-criticism, the question then arises whether we

should not logically fuse with the BL--the KJO must naturally be dismissed for political reasons. To answer this question we must first clarify our political differences with the BL-group.

Now that the Second National Conference has run its course, and with the de facto abandonment of the platform through the Resolution on the Transformation of the Organization (of Bolfra and Comfra: author), we are no longer operating in a vacuum, but rather can begin to build towards a continuity of practical work as well as on the basis of clear programmatic positions.<sup>2</sup>

Well, how about this claim which the BL advance for their resolution?

As a whole the resolution is nothing more than a stringing together of individual Bolfra proposals, which were developed on the basis of the KJO platform and then "supplemented" by the abrupt juxtaposition of the postulate of a "strategic as well [as tactical] reorientation toward the class as a whole," as the result of the debate at the National Conference. With it Bolfra and Comfra attempted to reach agreement, despite considerable political differences,<sup>3</sup> on the basis of a minimal compromise. However, the resolution took cognizance of the positions of Comfra only in its more general statements and in the single word "strategic." Nor did they stop to consider that minimal compromises are usually by nature rotten ones, effected to conceal the true positions. Thus there emerges in the single line held to in the paper an "incredible confusion" of "strategic" and "tactical" orientation--terms which are apparently employed and understood side by side as if of equal value, so that the strategic redirection is often even understood as the organic consequence of the tactical one.

An example: "The tactical turn of SPARTACUS to the class as a whole requires a complete alteration and reorientation of our intervention."<sup>4</sup> The first part of the sentence suggests that the strategic reorientation is the organic consequence of the tactical one, or can at least be derived from it--something that would ultimately be a total revision of the bolshevik concept of strategy, which understands tactics as a political means toward realizing the strategic tasks and thus subsumes tactics under the strategic conception. In the second part, however, the complete--i.e., presumably, we would hope, basic strategic--reorientation is requisite. This contradiction is subsequently treated in a fashion such that the content of this amorphously defined reorientation becomes the building of union groups [i.e., caucuses] in the factories, a breakthrough into the shop-steward committees, etc. But with what political content, with what demands and concrete goals of struggle derived from a strategic conception is one to construct union caucuses and to intervene in them as a fraction? What function do they have for the realization of what strategy? The BL do not answer these questions. They adduce forms of struggle without their content--for which content these should, after all, really constitute the form--and without indicating their strategic place and value because of the BL's lack of a strategic conception.

Elsewhere, for example, the BL statement criticizes the demand for the EGJS immanently, from the level of the KJO conception (ibid., pp. 3-4)--only to then establish the following in conclusion: "In view of the strategic and tactical reorientation, the NC states that the EGJS [independent trade union youth section] can no longer be one of the demands of SPARTACUS."<sup>5</sup> Although, based on our rejection of

the KJO "strategy," we naturally likewise reject the demand for the EGJS, we must say that the BL conceive of the rejection of the EGJS inter alia as the consequence of the strategic reorientation. Here we see once again that they fail to recognize the qualitative differences between strategy and tactics,<sup>6</sup> place them side by side as if of equal value, indeed here apparently identify them with one another. That is, they would like to continue peacefully implementing on the same level over a long term the non-strategically oriented amateurish intervention in the class as a whole which was carried on previously by SPARTACUS-KJO.

Thus we come to the conclusion that the BL's evaluation of the "programmatic character of the resolution," which we quoted initially, is a confidence trick, and that, to the contrary, this resolution is characterized by its contradictoriness, indeed confusion. Queried regarding this, a member of their National Leadership pointed to the manner in which this resolution came into existence at the NC and to Bolfra's insufficient preparation, thereby indirectly admitting the correctness of our criticism of the lack of programmatic bases, at least so far as the resolution is concerned.

Despite all these deficiencies, this document did constitute an important point of departure for the BL in freeing themselves from the impressionistic positions of the KJO (strategic orientation toward working youth). But this hope was bitterly disappointed by the following statement of the National Leadership of 2 January 1972. There the following interesting conclusion was reached: "A national strategy receives its particular definition on the basis of the objective conditions of decaying monopoly capitalism and must be concretized through the particular definition of the subjective factor." Since, however, the structural tendencies toward the down-grading of working youth are valid on an international scale, one can derive the justification for the particular strategic role of working youth only from "national peculiarities."

The national peculiarities in the state of development of the subjective factor in West Germany, if taken to their ultimate consequences, form the basis for the necessary orientation toward working youth as a strategic moment in the construction of the party. National peculiarities can, however, never justify a separate national organizational form for a sector of the working class. Such an organization for a sector of the working class must necessarily degenerate and lead to unbolshevik organizational forms such as the IKD-KJO. Hence the KJO construct--but not the particular strategic consideration accorded the role of working youth--was from the very beginning an incorrect organizational expression of the national peculiarities of West Germany.<sup>7</sup>

Already at the beginning of this line of argumentation (which we have cited at length), we find a mechanically isolated conception of the subjective factor, which is developed concretely in apparent independence of its material basis, once its importance and objective frame of development are generally determined on the abstract level of the epoch.<sup>8</sup> But the subjective factor can be analyzed concretely --and not merely abstractly--only in its dialectical relationship to the objective conditions of development. The dialectical unity of subjective and objective factors is thus produced differently in the framework of the general basic characteristics of the epoch [on the one hand] and in the concrete and continuous real process [on the other]. To make this argument concrete:

The demoralization of the working class, generated by the betrayal of its stalinist and social democratic leaderships, by fascism, etc., does not act in a supra-historical fashion divorced from the process of capital realization in its particular stages, as the KJO would suggest. From this relationship (which the KJO has not even clearly recognized), the KJO then infers long-term insurmountable barriers to the anchoring of proletarian class-consciousness in the class as a whole. But this demoralization was able to have such a devastating effect--and thus become part of an objective barrier--only under the particular conditions of the reconstruction period and its effects on the working class and its organizations--inter alia the massive spread of welfare-state illusions, an increasing rate of integration, the ideology of cooperative class partnership. However, with the disappearance of the material basis of these barriers through the entry of the process of capital realization into its new stage, these barriers themselves become very fluid and lose their semblance of absolute insurmountability as a result of the confrontation with capitalist reality. Political consciousness, to be sure, does not arise automatically in the intensified offensive of the bourgeoisie.

It thus becomes a necessity for communists once again to anchor political class-consciousness in the working class and to construct a genuine proletarian vanguard on a correct strategic basis through the initiation and continuing leadership of political struggles. This is probably concealed behind the [BL's] anonymous national peculiarities (the particular situation of the subjective factor in West Germany) which, in the opinion of the BL leadership, justify the supposedly strategically special role of working youth in West Germany.<sup>9</sup> The BL are thus once again coming dangerously close to the impressionistic positions of the KJO, especially since, even if we do not consider the arguments developed above, the special strategic role of working youth has by no means been demonstrated. For the demonstrably increasing integration does not operate only on the worker individually, but rather especially through the organizations of the working class--essentially, workers' parties and trade unions--which, after all, represent the organizational form taken on by the consciousness of the working class and which, conversely, anchor themselves in the class. Thus young as well as older workers are affected by the integrationist tendencies and by anti-communist ideology, etc., mediated through the workers' bureaucracy which dominates their organizations. No qualitative difference can be construed which would justify assigning a particular strategic role to working youth vis-à-vis the class as a whole.

But now to the last and decisive point, the structural tendencies toward down-grading of working youth which, combined with the particular situation of the subjective factor, supposedly accord a strategic significance to the orientation toward working youth. Here the BL make things especially easy for themselves. They simply take as point of departure the KJO thesis on the down-grading of working youth, without even mentioning the all-embracing character of this tendency, namely the down-grading of the whole class. Once one has assumed the isolated impact of this tendency on working youth without any derivation or proff whatsoever, one is naturally not required to clarify the relationship between down-grading of the whole class and that of a particular part, the youth, and to justify, in whatever fashion, the particular structural situation arising from this. (An extensive criticism of this position can be found in our pamphlet.) The relapse into the positions of the KJO, even though modified, has been completed. Thus, in conversation with our group,

leading BL comrades, in contradiction to the National Leadership's statement, immediately drew back from this internally inconsistent position, with the admission that this position has not been proven at all. As sole justification for the particular strategic role of working youth there then emerged the particular situation of the subjective factor in West Germany (already disposed of above). From the above criticism of the written positions of the BL, it should be clear that we can in no way "stand on these programmatic bases." Indeed, we deny completely their programmatic character. But our relationship to SPARTACUS-BL cannot be determined solely from this necessary conclusion. In the conversation between BL representatives and our group, already alluded to several times, the said comrades, in answer to our criticism of their papers, repeatedly pointed to the provisional character of these positions, to the manner in which they evolved (the resolution), etc. They also for their part supported the necessity of developing a derived strategic conception and thus indirectly admitted to having no firm programmatic bases. Where can we best attain this goal [of working out a program]? Inside or outside the BL? We are of the opinion that a narrow-minded separation from the BL would constitute a continuation of our previous error (exit from the KJO before the NC) and would simply be sectarian. Instead we must, together with all those comrades who have recognized the central importance of developing a materialistically derived strategic conception appropriate to the developmental dynamics of the class struggle, undertake the realization of this task without splintering our forces, without abandoning in liquidationist fashion the already existing organizational and practical steps in this direction. On the other hand, a negative attitude on the part of the BL toward our joining or fusing would be just as sectarian. For to point to the existing political differences can in no wise justify such a course, since the BL, as our first conversation established, lack the programmatic bases to justify such a course. They must first work out these programmatic bases, even as we must. In rejecting our entry, the BL would narrow the base for this decisive work and thereby damage their own organization.

In addition, it must be in our mutual interest to prevent a stabilization of the IKD-KJO tendency. The present situation, in which the IKD-KJO tendency has been greatly weakened and rendered insecure by the split, which was so unfavorable to them, is the most favorable point in time to do that. The longer we hesitate with the offensive, the more time the IKD-KJO will have for internal consolidation. Berlin, the IKD's stronghold, possesses central importance for the offensive, since, in contrast to most of the West German regions, and precisely because of our premature exit, no corresponding process of differentiation had occurred in Berlin before the NC. Thus there still exists here critical potential, both in the KJO and in its circle of sympathizers. But if a breakthrough in the Berlin flank of the KJO is the prerequisite for a successful struggle against the KJO, on the other hand it is certain that this is possible only with a strong local group and cannot be realized by your minimal forces in Berlin. For these reasons we ask all members of SPARTACUS-BL to discuss and support our offer of fusion in their local groups and leading organs.

With bolshevik greetings

Proletarian Internationalism Group  
(Trotskyist)

February 1972

## NOTES

1 For a refutation of the KJO conception, cf. both our withdrawal statement and the more comprehensive analyses in our just published pamphlet, which presents a summary of our political bases and tasks. Hereafter we shall enter into criticism of the KJO conception only so far as this is necessary for clarification of our political differences with the BL.

2 Statement of the National Leadership of SPARTACUS-BL of 2 January 1972, page 1.

3 On this question cf. the Bolfra platform and statements of members of the National Leadership; the platform of Comfra as well as the contradictions in the solution "On the Transformation of the Organization" (Bolfra and Comfra).

4 Resolution, p. 3.

5 Ibid., p. 4.

6 See above.

7 All this from the statement of the National Leadership, 2 January 1972.

8 On this cf. also: "The particular role of the subjective factor in the epoch of Imperialism," MDB 4 of SPARTACUS-BL, esp. pp. 3 ff., where a similar tendency is put forth, although quite cautiously and unclearly. The concept "analysis of the subjective factor" is also symptomatic: as if there could be such an isolated independent analysis for Marxists.

9 We should like to mention that the BL in their first document, the resolution, performed a completely correct evaluation: Resolution, p. 1. So much the more pity is this relapse.

New York

14 March 1972

Germany

To the IKD and  
the Spartacus-BL:

Dear Comrades,

We are writing to inform you of our interim views following intensive discussion in our Political Bureau on the split in the Spartacus-KJO between the Bolfra-Komfra bloc and the IKD and its supporters at the 11-12 December national conference leading to the publication of the counterposed organs, Spartacus-BL and Spartacus-KJO.

We note that the Spartacus-BL carried an advertisement for our press in its Dec.-Jan. issue, No.25 and in February published a German reprint of our article from Spartacist, "Chinese Menshevism." Similarly the IKD-supported Spartacus-KJO reprinted in its February issue, No.26, the first part of our article from Workers Vanguard, "The End of the Black Power Era." We are of course appreciative for this publicizing of our press and circulation of our views among German militants, but this activity in the light of your unfortunate split makes it more urgent for us to arrive at a definitive political estimation of the split and of the groupings which emerged from it. In any case we are concerned with the future of the revolutionary movement in Germany as a necessary aspect of our Marxist responsibility as internationalists committed to the struggle to rebuild the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. We also recognize that your split, like any serious division, has undoubtedly generated extreme heat and deep antagonism. This too makes it necessary for us to proceed in an open, careful, clear and above all political fashion, avoiding to the best of our ability any suggestion of maneuverism, false partisanship or any other evidence of the terrible destructive policy of playing one German organization against the other for some alleged advantage on our part.

Moreover, we do not doubt that for the most serious elements among you, the present split is but one of many splits and regroupments in the struggle to re-create a revolutionary vanguard party of the German workers. (Just think of the history of the Russian and Polish movements from the turn of the century through the Russian revolution!) Hence among yourselves and between you and us, the most rigorous subordination of hostility and maneuver must prevail so that we will not poison our future struggles to the detriment of the revolutionary outcome.

II.

We would like to offer you our tentative and still partial estimation of the present split to the extent we have been able to understand it. We have arrived at an interim policy which is subject to change as we are still working on corrected translations of the main public texts from the split. And we will study the evolution of the

emergent groups, hopefully benefited by our discussions with your organizations along the way.

We are under the impression that at your split conference two questions predominated, the lesser one being the partly political question of organizational relationships, specifically of the IKD to the Spartacus youth group. When our delegation of comrades Gordon, Nelson and Robertson visited Berlin last year for discussions with the IKD leadership and others in the IKD-Spartacus we noted then that the failure to develop the Leninist norm of youth-party relations was apparent and we argued that this question could well be a source of trouble. The IKD seemed to regard itself as a sort of special theoretical auxiliary to Spartacus which, while reflecting the real process of the crystallization of the more experienced and conscious Spartacus comrades, failed to take account of the necessary transformation of such a leading group into a democratic-centralist vanguard in relationship to the Spartacus youth organization. Hence as things stood should counterposed majorities develop within the Spartacus and the IKD respectively, no regulated mechanism for factional political struggle existed and any such difference could only be resolved by organizational negotiation, capitulation or split rather than the possibility, following debate and decision, of the disciplined subordination of the minority of the IKD-Spartacus movement--as a separately organized, but united whole--to the majority. We have attempted in the developing relationship of the SL with the Revolutionary Communist Youth to codify the experience of the Leninist period of the Third International in our jointly approved document regulating SL/RCY relations. This document has been translated into German and circulated among your comrades.

We understand that both Spartacus-IKD and -BL justify some variant of "freedom of criticism" by which is apparently meant that dissidents are free to make public propaganda at variance with that of the organization. If this is true it too is a departure from Leninism sure to breed numerous splits and to render the movement incapable of intervening as revolutionists in the class struggle.

We also understand that the KJO (Communist Youth Organization) orientation advanced by the IKD is central to your dispute and that involved in this question are major questions such as the character of the epoch, the validity of the Transitional Program and the revolutionary potential of the German working class as a whole. It is possible that present conditions in Germany justify the KJO as a tactic should it be that the apprentices are much more accessible to revolutionary propaganda and organization than the older workers just now. But as a strategic orientation the KJO systematically extended to its conclusions could only be a denial of Marxism and of a proletarian revolutionary perspective.

The orientation of revolutionary Marxists to the working class as such necessarily poses sharply the question of the SPD. In our view, the continuing validity of the Transitional Program in the epoch of imperialism (i.e. the eve of proletarian revolution and the highest stage of capitalism) provides the fundamentals, politically

and methodologically, for determining an approach to the SPD once its class character is determined. The KJO position is related to the appraisal of the SPD in both an objective and subjective fashion. So far as we know both factions in your split characterize the SPD as a bourgeois technocratic party (akin to the U.S. Democratic Party). We consider this not merely wrong but that without a correct position on this question there cannot be a viable strategy for proletarian revolution in Germany. Only the low level of the class struggle in post-war Germany inhibits a manifest recognition that the SPD is a reformist (i.e. both bourgeois and proletarian) party which must at some point be destroyed. If the revolutionists ignore it, the SPD will employ its historically-evolved authority among the workers to disrupt and defeat the next revolutionary onslaught. The SPD's destruction must be sought at the appropriate junctures through intervention to sharpen inner differentiation to resolve, i.e. split, it into its essential bourgeois and proletarian elements, the latter organized into or led by a Leninist party. Only then will the SPD have been reduced, if still existent, to an external obstacle to social revolution.

The attempt to identify the SPD as akin concretely to the U.S. Democrats is ludicrous: the Young Democrats consists overwhelmingly of lawyers and professional people, not apprentices, centrists, Maoists, etc.; the Democrats receive sometime electoral endorsement from the distinctly separate top bodies of the trade union movement, labor leaders are in no way cadres of the Democratic Party and are but one of numerous pressure groups upon the Democrats; it is therefore grotesque and inconceivable to try to visualize the Democratic Party with factory fractions running slates competing in shop steward elections. These are but a few empirical contrasts. Regarding the SPD, to put it most generally, only great historical events involving enormous mass participation can definitively transform mass organizations. The creation of the mass KPD out of the fusion with the Independents partly demolished the SPD but the incapacity of the KPD facing the rise of Nazism and the Stalinists' association with the victorious Russian army strengthened the role of the SPD within the German working class.

We recognize the Leninist-Trotskyist distinction between first determining the working class character of a political party and then settling the question of entry. Moreover, given the rigid bureaucratic structure of the SPD, lack of strong internal tendencies toward polarization, i.e., minimal current opportunity for intervention within it and the urgent other tasks of revolutionists, entry to assist in splitting the SPD does not appear to be justified as a current tactic. But at each point the Marxists must have a line toward the SPD. With the SPD in a governing coalition as at present, we should note that the SPD has suppressed its inner class-contradiction by limiting its working program to that acceptable to its purely bourgeois ally. Hence we should tell the German working class voter that the SPD merits no support however critical until it breaks from its coalitionist practice, i.e., can in government become itself responsible for its conduct. Should the SPD campaign as the British Labor Party does on its own (except of course when the bourgeoisie really needs it as in the National Government of 1931 and during World War II) then our advocacy of electoral support should be along

the lines of e.g. "Brandt Out! SPD to Power!"

The SPD question possesses a certain subjective significance for both Spartacus-KJO and -BL. The cadres of each are evidently very young, mainly student and essentially originated in the German New Left. The ability of comrades from such a milieu to come to grips with the realities of proletarian revolutionary struggle is an index of the decisiveness of their break from the swamp of petty-bourgeois anarchic, youth vanguardist and Third World fantasizing. Generally among groups springing from these origins the question of evaluating the class character of deformed workers states as well as "deformed" workers parties is a litmus test of their grasp of Trotskyism.

### III.

Taking all of the above into account, tentatively it would appear that Spartacus-BL stands closer to us, but given the rapid political mobility of the youthful German revolutionary left this appearance even if true is not necessarily definitive. Further, it is not now clear to us that the differences between the two German organizations are more than quantitative from our standpoint. Therefore as an interim policy on our part we propose in a fraternal fashion to continue seeking verbal and written discussions with each group, fully protecting any confidences of one group from the other. We hope to continue publishing fundamental SL documents in German and offering them equally and generally for distribution in Germany.

Surely our policy, which we find forced upon us by your split, must be deemed highly unsatisfactory by each of your groups to the extent either is concerned with the views of the SL. However we see no alternative to it at present other than an abstentionist anti-international withdrawal from concern about the German movement or the Pabloist organizational practices of surreptitious intrigue--quite in contradiction to our programmatic aspiration of struggling to rebuild the Fourth International, i.e. upon principled foundations.

To reiterate: Ours is an interim policy based upon either the unclarity in your split or present deficiencies in our understanding or both. We hope you will assist us with written materials, discussions with our representatives and if possible with your representatives here in the U.S. in order to overcome the ambiguity which we feel. Incidentally we have scheduled the Third National Conference of the SL over the Labor Day weekend of 2-4 Sept. 1972.

At such a point that developments in the German movement or our understanding of it leads to a qualitative differentiation between your groups in our eyes, our first act will be to openly and publicly declare our position and its political basis.

Fraternally,  
For the Political Bureau, SL/US:

W. Moore (German representative, SL/US)

James Robertson (National Chairman,  
SL/US)

copies to:  
RCL (Britain), Samarakkody (Ceylon),  
Long (SL/NZ), Sharpe (French representative, SL/US),  
Central Committee, SL/US

REPORT ON SPARTACUS-BL CONFERENCE

Paris, 31 July 1972

National Office, SL

Dear Comrades,

1) General: The conference gave us a lot of insight into the personnel, organization and politics of Spartacus-BL. They had 36 delegates, at 1 delegate for 4 members. It is an extremely young group--and that has a lot of implications. They have obviously come a long way since last December. Although the conference was pretty disorganized by our standards, we would hate to imagine what the December split conference was like. They didn't use speakers lists at first, so a few comrades tended to dominate discussion, go on too long, and then had to eliminate things from the agenda. Under the press of time they did discover time limits on speaking toward the end. They nonetheless got through it, and now have a basic statement, statutes, a CC, PB, etc.

A sign of the disorganization is that all the major position papers (there were two or three on every question) arrived only within the last 10 days, some coming only at the conference. Thus the resolution of differences had to take place at the conference, without the chance of working things out in advance so positions would be clear. The result was that much of the discussion was fuzzy and very confusing (especially while trying to sort out who was who at the same time).

The conference was supposed to start Saturday at 10, but by 11:30 some delegates still weren't there. They went ahead anyhow.

2) Political Report by old leadership: Evidence of their confusion is that we were allowed to sit through about half of the Political Report, although it involved a big fight. The leadership in the last 6 months has been very unstable, with 5-6 changes in the membership of the CC (which has 7 members and 2 alternates), i.e., in the attempt to consolidate, they were forced to use comrades who couldn't do various jobs and had to be dropped. Further, there are at least 2-3 separate identifiable groups. First, the Berlin group (Kanthak), which apparently entered Spartacus-BL last February with a factional perspective. They were in a minority about almost everything. The chief characteristic of Berlin is an insistence on what might be called absolute theory--i.e., that everything they do must be derived (and not only potentially derivable) from the basic character of the epoch. Thus, for example, they insisted that the general character of Stalinism excludes the possibility of ever critically supporting it. In general, they are theoretically top heavy, and somewhat economicistic. This meant both that they dominated discussion and that the discussion suffered from it. Berlin was the only group (4 delegates) to vote against the basic statement of principles.

Second, the Bonn-leadership group. This includes a lot of the old leadership of the former Bolfra tendency. This group is in full flux, and is hard to characterize politically. It changed its position on a couple of major questions less than a week before the

conference (e.g. critical support to the DKP and, in part, on SPD). I am not entirely sure where they stand.

Third, Nord-Rhein-Westphalen. By far the most impressive section. They have a strong left-communist trend which given the state of confusion is healthy (in the main). Thus the leadership proposed "Results and Prospects" for the title of a theoretical journal, NRW proposed "Banner of Communism." By far the most organized group. The only group to have systematically worked out proposals on major questions for which they fought hard. Also tended to have the best arguments (e.g. in the DKP question, see below). Foster thinks that the leader of NRW at the conference may be a key factor in Spartacus-BL's future. However, these groupings don't always form systematic wholes, and the whole organization is open--the very fact that there were a number of major papers on every question (not counting the minor ones--in all, on just the question of factory work, there were 20 proposals, among 36 delegates!!!) is an indication of this weakness (and also their strength since they are honestly trying to work things out starting essentially from scratch). Thus the above characterizations should be taken as provisional.

3) Basic statement of principles: 3 major proposals: leadership; Berlin; extensively modified leadership proposal by NRW. The statement (which we didn't ever see, because there weren't any extra copies--another example of disorganization) was very heavy on history and theory. They want to derive every concrete political statement from the corpus of Marxist theory on the spot. The majority of the statement (approximately 30 paragraphs out of 45) bears on history and theory and the difference between Strategy and Tactics. A short section at the end on concrete present political questions. It has little or no mention of history of III and IV Internationals, Trotskyism, etc.

However, it is not too bad, from the quick glance I got at one copy. They are to produce a final version within a month and send it to us.

In essence, the NRW version dominated, I think.

I am least clear about this section of the conference, because I was still figuring out who was who.

4) Statutes: They are incomplete (lack of experience), but straightforward, with some very good formulations. Although they have a clause called "Freedom of Criticism--Unity of Action" they define it simply to mean the right to form factions. Factions must be based on a political platform submitted to the organization and which contains points that can be voted on.

5) DKP (German CP): This was in a sense the major debate of the conference. Again, 3 positions: original leadership proposal not to offer the DKP critical support, but rather to concentrate on direct work in the working class and factories, and "class demands"; the NRW proposal to offer critical support to DKP in fall elections; and a third by a member of the old leadership, which was drawn up only in the last week and was not available in written form.

The entire discussion on this question was deformed by the SPD question, which everybody wanted to avoid.

The leadership proposal which called for workers to submit blank ballots at the election and for Spartacus-BL to devote itself to work in factories tended to describe the SPD as a labor party (although they characterize it as a bourgeois party) and base non-support of DKP (1) on world historical nature of Stalinism (a petty-bourgeois tendency) and (2) need to offer alternative directly to bourgeois (SPD) party and petty-bourgeois (DKP) party. They are more concerned with approaching social-democratic workers directly.

Those favoring critical support (NRW) to DKP were harsher on SPD, but based support on (1) most advanced workers are turning to DKP as left alternative; (2) DKP is taking a left turn to pick up militant support on economic and democratic rights issues; (3) DKP program has supportable elements (30/40, no layoffs, independence of trade unions from the state, etc.); (4) need to fight influence of SPD in working class. Rhetorically, they had the best arguments. They were reproached with making arguments which would also apply in some conditions to SPD. They also saw critical support as preparing the way for some specific united front actions and thus as breaking workers from DKP and SPD (the only point in conference at which the question of the United Front was introduced).

Finally, the "Compromise proposal," ultimately worked out by the original third proposer and the Bonn group (which also came out for critical support the day of the conference), was as follows:

- 1) DKP has made a left turn only rhetorically, not yet actually
- 2) SPD workers are turning to DKP because of their rhetoric
- 3) Spartacus-BL will take a position clearly defining betrayals of DKP in past, in particular subordinating DKP to SPD in previous elections and struggles
- 4) Spartacus-BL will hold DKP to their program and try to make the differences between them clear.

In particular, Spartacus-BL will take up and demand that the DKP carry out following points of their program:

- a) for independent organizations of the class not tied to the bourgeoisie (or the state)
- b) struggle against SPD influence in class
- c) certain number of economic demands (no layoff, sliding scale, etc.)
- 5) If the DKP really takes up the fight for what they have put in the center of their propoganda, and fights in unions, factories, etc. for these issues, then Spartacus-BL will support them critically in the elections.

The proposal to give the DKP critical support in principle carried overwhelmingly (27-8), though the NRW voted against this interpretation of it as having bad notion of "critical support" that is, the "if...then" formulation.

The discussion was bad, deformed by SPD question--they have to insist that SPD is a bourgeois party, but most describe it in fact as a labor party. There is enormous opposition to Moore's first paper--no one is convinced, and the question that came up over and

over was "Is that the SL position?" However, they are not without a sense of humor about it. At the end, at the CC meeting, we suggested that if the SPD is a bourgeois party, they should call immediately for an independent labor party--they appreciated the remark. This is a main point for discussion (see below).

6) Those were the main points of the conference itself. We got a much better idea of what they are. We can and should certainly continue relations and discussion with them.

7) Meeting with newly elected CC: (They have changed their structure to CC/PB, with CC members chosen by ability--after a brief fight about it.)

a) We entered a strong protest about no literature, no communication, improper channels, etc. They agreed with our criticisms, appeared shocked by the extent of their organizational disorder, and promised to regularize things.

b) H. is in the US on a personal visit. He does not represent Spartacus-BL. Some members of the CC were not even aware he was in the US. Whether F. will represent Spartacus-BL has not been decided. The first meeting of the CC will decide and write to SL CC concerning F.'s status.

c) We will officially exchange publications, and all internal papers which deal with political positions (i.e. as opposed to organizational questions, personnel, etc.) on national and international questions. We will receive officially 2 copies of everything. They do not want to send internal material to an open known address. We agreed to supply them a security address. They do not, as an organization, have any of our materials (although most members have a fair amount of our literature as personal copies). We agreed to send a complete set of everything for their archives.

d) They read us the international section of their newly-adopted "basic statement." We took exception to a couple of the formulations (in addition, of course, to the SPD question), but agreed with most of it.

1) They criticize "splits and fusions" regroupment perspective as abstract and literary, and oppose to it regroupment on "solid strategic programmatic basis." We said that was a false opposition (parenthetically, it follows from their insistence on deriving everything from scratch and at enormous length),

2) we criticized their description of the OCI as being slightly off, and

3) their lack of orientation to ORO's in Germany.

e) We agreed to have formal, extensive official contact and discussion, in written form on all decisive questions so that it would 1) be clear, 2) could be circulated and discussed through the 2 organizations, 3) would eliminate the possibility of impressionistic confusion and misunderstandings.

Our proposals for discussion are:

- 1) SPD
- 2) question of approach to regroupment and ORO's
- 3) International regroupment and approach to OCI's  
"Organizing Committee."

Theirs are:

- 1) Development of Fourth International after the war
- 2) The path to the Construction-Reconstruction of the Fourth International and the programmatic basis for it (i.e. concrete application of 1938 Transitional Program)
- 3) SPD.

We had a slight exchange on just what was meant by "application" of Transitional Program--how literal it was to be; whether the stress was on methodology (which they tend to do) etc. That will also have to be clarified.

f) They proposed a common front in Paris in an approach to OCI. They have a couple of people they can send there. We said that would have to await further discussion and be mutually decided by the respective PBs, and that we could not agree to that right now.

General: The meeting with the CC was a very good one. It laid a serious basis for discussion and also, I think, straightened out once and for all the question of organization to organization contacts. The members of the CC not resident in Bonn were (or seemed) genuinely shocked by our complaints (1) not getting discussion material for the conference, before or even during conference, (2) that NY has officially no issues of their paper after the split, so how could we judge them, (3) that my personal subscription in Paris has never been received, (4) also that neither they nor IKD had replied to our letter of March 14. They readily admitted it all, and said that they have been trying to form an organization and international contacts had slipped to a personal level, but of course that is not an excuse.

Will try to fill in details when I get back, in a week or so.

Comradely,

Sharpe