

February 4, 1976

To Leninist Trotskyist Faction Coordinators

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed are the following items:

1. A letter to the United Secretariat from Art Young replying to the December 23, 1975 letter from Walter. The December 23 letter was included in the January 15, 1976, mailing to the Leninist Trotskyist Faction coordinators.

2. Three items from the PRT of Portugal for the information of the LTF.

Comradely,

John Benson

COPY

LSA-LSO
Toronto, Ontario
Canada
January 20, 1976

United Secretariat
Brussels, Belgium

Dear Comrades,

1. Our convention took place without hearing your reaction to our letter of December 18. Your letter dated December 23 arrived in Toronto on December 31, after the convention had ended.

Neither the Groupe Marxiste Revolutionnaire nor the Revolutionary Marxist Group were aware of your decision. Leaders of both organizations professed ignorance of any decision of the December United Secretariat meeting. A member of the GMR, François Cyr, addressed the convention, presenting greetings in the name of the GMR and RMG, but he made it clear that he was speaking only for the leaderships of those two organizations.

2. As we have explained, our invitation to the GSTQ to attend the convention, and our participation in some common projects with them, flow from political developments in this country and the evolution of relations between our two groups, and nothing else. This does not depend on the state of relations between the United Secretariat and the OCRFI; that is a different matter.

For example, you mention your fears that the OCRFI may hope to split the Fourth International, and your concern over alleged actions of the OCRFI's French affiliate, the OCI. But you do not show that these questions have any bearing on the Canadian section's decision to invite a particular organization with whom we have been working in Quebec to our convention.

We think that the United Secretariat should be encouraged by the growing influence and attractive power of the Fourth International in Canada, and appreciate the progress we are making.

3. You believe that the United Secretariat has the power to tell us who may or may not be invited to our convention. Your last letter enlarges this supposed power, informing us that the LSA/LSO may not act "to probe the possibility for discussion, collaboration or even regroupment" with the GWTQ without first clearing our moves with you. In other words, you attempt to arrogate authority not only over our right to discuss and collaborate with another political group in Canada, but over our right to probe the possibility for any discussion and collaboration.

We reject this attempt to establish veto power over tactical decisions of national sections. Decisions on how we intervene in the class struggle in Canada are the prerogative of the LSA/LSO. In our opinion, your instructions on this matter are in violation of the norms of democratic centralism as it has been practised in the Fourth International since reunification, and as it has been codified in the statutes.

4. Our convention instructed the incoming leadership to continue our course of seeking discussion and collaboration with the GSTQ on projects where we have agreement as long as this process promotes the building of the Canadian section.

This position was contained in the report on the Fourth International adopted unanimously at our convention. We will send you copies of the report as soon as it is published.

Comradely,

s/ Art Young

cc: GMR, RMG, Alain Krivine,
Jack Barnes

Lisbon, November 30, 1975

To the Comrades of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction (Fourth International)

Dear Comrades:

We send this letter to thank you for making it possible for us to attend your August meeting as observers and for sending us the document "Key Issues of the Portuguese Revolution" in October. We translated this document and distributed it to our members so that the party as a whole could evaluate it. In this letter we also want to inform you of the resolution that was approved in a general meeting of the PRT cell leaderships held on November 2, which Comrades Ed Shaw and Gerry Foley attended as guests. This resolution is intended as a contribution to discussion in the faction, with which we consider ourselves in political sympathy.

As regards the general analysis of the situation, the document was judged insufficient, fundamentally because it underestimates the extent and depth of the crisis facing the bourgeoisie in Portugal in both the political and economic fields. This error is reflected in many aspects. What we want to most emphasize is the gravest result of this. The document does not recognize the "Kerenskyist" character of the government and the situation of dual power that exists. Thus, the embryonic organs of workers and people's power are underestimated. So, the democratic slogans, whose importance is correctly stressed, are put finally in an abstract framework, which is dangerous because they are not linked to the central task of developing and centralizing workers power in soviet forms. We think this is grave, since a revolutionary Marxist document should make it clear that developing the organs of workers power is a life or death question for the revolution and for workers power. Moreover, developing the organs of workers power depends in large measure -- and this is the responsibility that falls to us -- on a correct orientation by the Trotskyists and their ability to win the mass movement for such a policy.

The estimate of the two organizations in Portugal that claim adherence to the Fourth International was judged unacceptable. It is not a political evaluation but an organizational one, and even on this point it is wrong. It is not true that the PRT and the LCI are "complementary." To prove this, all that is necessary is to look at the LCI's capitulation to the probourgeois, totalitarian plans of the PCP that were concretized in the FUR, a front of the ultraleft groups in the service of a popular frontist model. This policy was explicitly combatted by our organization. No complementariness exists either in the bases of the two organizations, and we were astonished by the error of attributing experience in political campaigns to an

organization whose every "political campaign" has led to their paper coming out irregularly or not at all and to the loss of members.

The list of tasks proposed for the two organizations was judged inadequate. On the one hand, it reflects an underestimation of the tempo of the Portuguese revolution, an underestimation that we mentioned above, which stresses general propaganda tasks over intervention in the class struggle. This also makes it understandable how the document can pose the possibility for the LCI and the PRT coming closer together through a process of discussion when the two organizations are distinguished by two conflicting courses of action. Moreover, it is a reflection of the nonpolitical or nearly nonpolitical character of the assessment of the two organizations that the document fails to recognize that the differences that exist at present pose great difficulties to any "principled" fusion. In order to advance toward such an objective, the first step is to understand correctly the political difficulties that stand in the way.

Finally, we cannot but express our surprise at the edited version of the document. As the reporter at the plenum noted, the PRT leadership considers that our participation, the debate, and the central conclusions that seemed to be reached at the meeting were extremely useful for our organization. In contrast to this, on seeing the document that emerged from this discussion, we have to come to the conclusion that this document did not in any way help clarify the central tasks of Trotskyists in the Portuguese revolution.

Fraternal Trotskyist Greetings
Central Leadership of the PRT

Point of clarification (12/12/75). We delayed sending this letter so that we could include with it the "Thesis" document that was in the process of being printed. Since difficulties arose that delayed publication of this document, we decided to send this note without further postponement.

Resolution of the Plenum of Cell Leaderships of the PRT
on the LTF Document

1. Considering the importance that the Portuguese Trotskyists take a position on the international debate over Portugal, particularly on the discussion in the LTF.

2. Considering that such a position must be taken in accordance with the need for keeping up a constant dialogue not only in order for us to benefit from the vast experience of the older, consolidated Trotskyist parties but also so that we can transmit to them our direct experience of the revolutionary situation we are living through,

3. Considering that it is essential for us to have a complete enough program to enable us to respond to the most striking feature that emerges from an analysis of the Portuguese situation, extensive though atomized dual power,

In a meeting of the respective cell leaderships held November 2, 1975, the PRT states that:

1. The general characterization of the situation in Portugal offered by the document is insufficient.

2. The balance sheet of the two Trotskyist organizations is totally unacceptable.

3. The program proposed for the Portuguese Trotskyists is inadequate.

The PRT leadership promises to send the LTF a letter explaining this resolution, which was unanimously adopted on November 2, 1975, along with the final version of its theses on the national situation.

December 8, 1975

To the PRT leadership

To all the comrades of the PRT

After we received the letter of the Political Bureau of the PST on the document "Key Issues in the Portuguese Revolution," I am obliged to write you this letter, which is motivated also by the surprise I felt when I saw that, in my opinion, the discussion at the LTF steering committee meeting is not in any way reflected in the final version of this document. I think in fact that this version of the document openly contradicts the conclusions and the agreements reached at the next to last meeting of the faction.

Since by special agreement I was able to attend the LTF steering committee meeting with right to voice on the question of the Portuguese revolution, I will try and convey to you the impressions I got from the discussion.

The discussion focused on a draft document presented by the SWP comrades. There were, so to speak, two distinct blocs that voiced criticisms from the outset of the content of the document, the PST and the Spanish LC. Concretely, the LC even presented a short document with amendments.

To summarize a bit the first speech of Comrade Hugo Moreno, since this contribution introduced and highlighted the main points of disagreement expressed by the PST, it seemed to me that the main features were the following:

--The need to define clearly that a process of proletarian revolution had opened up in Portugal and that, when a process of this type begins in a country, our objective must be to develop organs of workers power to take state power and make the socialist revolution.

--The need to explain that the government is very weak because of the pressure it faces from the mass movement, while pointing out that it had a bonapartist, authoritarian, and completely counter-revolutionary plan.

--That the objective of the document must be to determine immediate political tasks, eliminating any kind of theoretical discussion, especially on points where there was no agreement.

--That we might consider as a governmental slogan "Out with the MFA government no one voted for! For a government freely elected by the people." Such a slogan could have an explosive effect.

For its part, in the document it presented, the LC expressed the following points of difference.

"We can and must make clear on every one of the points what our specific differences are with the policy of the International Majority Tendency."

--It is necessary to characterize the Portuguese situation as prerevolutionary and the government as a popular front.

--We need a program that combines elementary economic and social demands with struggle for democratic freedoms and a body of transitional objectives. We need a concrete program for developing, transforming and consolidating the committees and commissions and a governmental slogan based on the organizations that have the support of a majority of the masses.

For my part, in my contribution I concentrated on pointing out the atomized dual power existing in Portugal and the need for focusing all our program around the development and centralization of the embryonic organs of workers and people's power -- the Workers Commissions, Tenants Commissions, and the Assemblies of Unit Delegates.

It is true that in this period we were in the process of discussion and we held positions that were certainly confused as regards the question of the MFA. Nonetheless, I clearly pointed out the vital need for developing the independent organization of the workers in their own organs of power.

The debate came to life and it seemed that the various positions could be reconciled when Comrade Joe Hansen spoke. I thought that he spoke in the name of the SWP leadership.

Joe said that his intention was to go beyond a "forced agreement" to what could be called a clear one. Responding to Moreno, he was absolutely in agreement on the following points, it seemed to me:

--We should make quite clear that the process in Portugal is a proletarian revolution, in which organs of workers power must develop.

--That the character of the government must be defined as popular frontist.

--That there must be slogans dealing with the economic crisis.

He also said that the Constituent Assembly should be used as a springboard for the demand that the CP and the SP take power.

As regards the LC's proposed amendments, he said:

--He was prepared to include the definition of the government a popular frontist. Moreover, it seemed to me that it was in agreement with Moreno's characterization of it as Kerenskyist. The only thing was that nowadays no one knows what this term means and that what was important was that it was a class-collaborationist government.

--That it would be necessary to take up the problem of the Angolan refugees in the document, demand the withdrawal of troops from Angola, and offer an answer to unemployment by demanding public works projects and also to answer to the problem of soviets.

Finally, he agreed that there should be articles to analyze clearly the crisis of Portuguese capitalism and on the centrist organizations. If the Spaniards wanted, they could do this.

At the end of this point, the "general line" of the document was approved, and an editing committee was elected made up of Joe, Hugo, and Roberto.

So, everything seemed to have been done to make the document a real and necessary point of reference for all the organizations that align themselves with the LTF. In fact, this discussion was very valuable for the PRT, which can go forward in building a more and more correct Trotskyist program for the Portuguese reality.

This is why I was surprised when I saw the document published in Intercontinental Press.

--It characterizes the various governments as "military regimes, which not only is not a political characterization but is a camouflaged way of calling them bonapartist.

It pays no attention and does not show the slightest understanding of the Workers Commissions and the other embryonic organs of workers power and is not even capable of calling the workers commissions by their real name.

It sets as a central task for the Portuguese Trotskyists the unification of the PRT and the LCI, which is complete nonsense at a time when the LCI is totally mired in the swamp of centrism and ultraleftism.

For these reasons, the plenum of cell leaderships of our party decided on November 2, 1975, to consider the document insufficient, unacceptable, and inadequate.

Revolutionary and Trotskyist
Greetings,
Paulo