

New York  
April 27, 1976

To Leninist Trotskyist Faction Coordinators

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is a letter to Joe Hansen from Ernest Mandel. The article by Ricardo Hernandez that it refers to, as well as the March 17 letter from Joe Hansen to the Bureau of the Steering Committee of the International Majority Tendency, were already sent to you in the ITF mailing dated April 21.

Comradely,

Caroline Lund

LETTER TO JOSEPH HANSEN FROM ERNEST MANDEL

April 17, 1976.

Dear Joe,

We have received your letter of March 17, 1976, and have given it due consideration.

First of all we want to point out that the way you address your letter seems bizarre to us, to say the least. The International Majority Tendency is an ideological grouping. Its steering committee and Bureau draft documents related to the political debate going on inside the FI, or submit documents to the leading bodies of the FI on current political developments. They have no business editing articles submitted to I. P. by comrades who are not members of the IMT. Nor have they the function to supervise decisions taken by the IEC or by the USEC.

If, for factional reasons, and in the framework of what more and more appears to be a systematic campaign of questioning the character of the F. I. as a well-defined organization, with appropriate statutory rules, leadership bodies and commonly accepted discipline, you proceed to identify the normally elected bodies of the F. I. with tendency bodies, this is an inadmissible procedure. We shall not give in to this undermining the normal functioning of our organization. So we dismiss as out of order any letter sent to "the Bureau of the Steering Committee of the IMT" in relation with the article by comrade Ricardo Hernandez. We will not submit this letter to that Bureau or any other body of the IMT. There will be no answer from the IMT to such an inappropriate letter.

We can deal with your letter only as sent to Pierre Frank, Livio Maitan and myself, in our quality as contributing editors of Intercontinental Press. We shall deal with its contents on that basis, and on that basis only.

Secondly, when you say that "In the history of the F. I. I do not recall anything remotely resembling this article" we could, leaving aside the obvious exaggeration, agree with you that matters dealt with by comrade Hernandez' article are certainly very exceptional in the history of the F. I., and extremely detrimental for it to be debated in public. Unfortunately, you started to deal with these matters in public, in I. P. Everything which you say about comrade Hernandez' article applies to your own previous article too. The matter of the "police agent" accusation and the "robbery question," to mention just these two items, were dealt with in your article first. Comrade Hernandez strongly disagrees with your version of these matters. He finds it "libellous" as you find his one. Everything thus boils down to a simple question: once the initial mistake was made by you of raising these unfortunate matters in our international press, should the readers of that press just get a one-sided version of them (and a minority version at that)? Or should they have the right to read both sides of the story, and judge by themselves?

The IEC expressed a clear opinion on the question. We share the unanimous opinion of the IEC. You seem to disagree with that opinion. This personal opinion of yours should not stand in the way of I. P. applying the IEC recommendation. We therefore urge you to reconsider your decision and to publish comrade Richard Hernandez' article, and stop the matter there (if you want to pursue the debate in internal bulletins, this would of course be unobjectionable, provided it implies the right of any other party involved in the dispute or in your polemics to give their possible answers to your versions in IIBBs too).

We certainly agree that it is most unfortunate to have this mutual mud-slinging in public. But, we repeat, this is the consequence of your initial mistake of publishing a one-sided version of the LS split in I. P. Furthermore, this mistake occurred after a USEC recommendation to our whole international press to abstain from commenting on that split in public, outside of Mexico, at least till further consultation and information had been gathered at the Center. Either you deliberately chose to ignore this recommendation or, what is worse, the representatives of your faction on the USEC, who were requested to immediately inform you about it by telephone, deliberately chose not to act upon that request, and deliberately kept you in ignorance of that recommendation. In any case, if you would not have rushed ahead with your article, if you would have consulted us before publishing it, we could have easily warned you about the unavoidable consequences of such a publication, i. e. that it would lead to a public polemic on the issue in our international press.

Our urgent demand that you publish comrade Hernandez' article in I. P., following the unanimous IEC recommendation, does not imply that the article could not be revised for publication. We want to remind you that the agreement we had arrived at at the IEC was that while you were in Europe, we should discuss together the first draft of comrade Hernandez, you, himself, comrade Manuel and the contributing editors of IP resident in Europe--which involved also all parties and opinion represented on the IEC Mexican commission which worked out the unanimously adopted resolution on the Mexican dispute. After such consultation, we could then have cut down controversy to the minimum, avoiding any new issues from being raised, provided comrade Hernandez was given the right to answer all elements in your initial article on the LS split which he considers objectionable, a right to answer which is obviously his, from the point of view of equality of rights of all members of our movement. This procedure of revision of his article by common agreement is still open.

Although your stay in Europe provided ample time for

such mutual consultation, you preferred to avoid it in order, for the nth time, to present us with an accomplished fact: unilateral and personal refusal to publish, full stop. In the past, these accomplished facts were related to serious political differences which you have with political positions adopted by the F. I. This time, your accomplished facts (first publishing your article on the LS split, then refusing to publish comrade Hernandez' answer) deal with an organizational crisis in a sympathizing section of the F. I., in which you intervened against the normally elected leadership, and by throwing oil on the flames, which, in our opinion, was irresponsible from every point of view.

Again we impress upon you the need for fraternal consultation and cooperation before decisions are taken which can have grave consequences inside our movement. Obviously, we cannot accept a refusal to publish, which openly violates the IEC recommendations. We shall therefore submit the matter to the USEC, and propose appropriate measures to make sure that the readers of the press of the International should not only know your version of the LS split, in case you would maintain your violation of the IEC recommendation.

Finally, on the question of whether comrade Hernandez' article modifies the situation in Mexico with regard to the possibility of rapid reunification, we strongly disagree with you. This comrade feels he has been gravely slandered. Furthermore, he is of the opinion that his organization has been weakened through an irresponsible split by a minority grouping refusing to recognize majority rule and normal congress decisions, a split which you have completely covered up for. You might find these feelings irrational and unfounded, but it is a fact that they exist. In spite of these feelings, he declared his willingness to accept a principled reunification with the former LS minority, provided that reunification respects both the basic programmatic and organizational norms of our movement. This is a correct procedure, urged upon him by a unanimous vote of the IEC. You cannot introduce

an additional condition for reunification: that he changes his judgment and feelings about past acts of the LS minority, or "forgets" them. You can only ask him not to let these feelings stand in the way of a principled reunification.

Likewise, we note from your article and your March 17, 1976 letter, that you continue to have the gravest doubts about the motivations, intentions and past actions of comrade Hernandez, which you characterize, inter alia as "most undemocratic," "abysmally low," capitulation before class collaboration, etc., etc. You are entitled to your judgment and feelings as he is entitled to his, -- but these judgments and feelings should not be obstacles on the road of a principled reunification, as they apparently were not, at the time of the unanimous IEC vote. The only conditions for that reunification are those layed down by the IEC resolution. If these conditions are respected by all sides then, irrespective of ill feelings and harsh judgments about past events, and with the aid of common practice, and time, bad reminiscences will slowly fade into the background. This is the only reasonable way to proceed.

Anybody who raises additional preconditions for unification (e. g., that one party in the reunification negotiations should change their minds on past issues and events, or "forget" them) is putting irremovable obstacles on the road towards that unification, and violates the letter and the spirit of the IEC recommendations. The refusal to publish comrade Hernandez' article based upon such a demand, after everything which happened (including the publication, in IP, after the IEC, of additional one-sided polemical material on the LS split), could only have the function of creating new obstacles on the road of reunification in Mexico. We cannot and will not share your responsibility in this.

Fraternally yours,  
Ernest