

October 10, 1974

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To the Leninist Trotskyist Faction Coordinators

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is the statement adopted by the steering committee of the LTF at the end of August. Also included is the letter to the United Secretariat informing them of the decisions reached at the steering committee meeting, and a brief letter from Gus Horowitz to Mohan Gan, one of the members of the steering committee who was not able to attend.

Comradely,

Ed Shaw

THE NEED FOR A SPECIAL WORLD CONGRESS

A Statement by the Steering Committee of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction

The internal situation in the Fourth International has deteriorated badly since the world congress was held. The International Majority Tendency has excluded the minority from participating in the day-to-day work of the international. Grave factional moves have been made against the Canadian section and the Argentine PST. A split has been engineered in the SWP. The possibility has been increased of a public split on an international scale. It is clear that extraordinary measures are required to correct this situation.

Where Things Stood at the Close of the Congress

In the pre-congress discussion and at the congress itself, the debate centered on the consequences of the "turn" adopted at the 1969 congress -- that is, the concessions made to guerrillism -- and the departure this represented from the methods outlined in the Transitional Program for building a mass revolutionary party.

In the process of debating the balance sheet of events in Bolivia and Argentina, which provided an objective test of the application of the Ninth Congress "turn," other political differences arose. These included such issues as the alleged appearance of a "new mass vanguard" in Europe and elsewhere and what kinds of political initiatives should be taken by the Fourth International in order to win the newly radicalizing students and young workers.

Despite the number of documents submitted, the discussion remained incomplete and unsatisfactory because of the delays in translating and circulating the material and the slowness of some sections and sympathizing organizations in initiating discussion. Nonetheless, it was recognized by both sides that the major differences between the two sides hinged on the "turn" adopted at the Ninth World Congress and its subsequent development, which the Leninist Trotskyist Faction characterized as an adaptation to the ultraleft pressures faced by our movement at the time.

On the level of theory, deeper differences were adumbrated. Leaders of the International Majority Tendency questioned the validity of characterizing the policies of the North Vietnamese leadership as "Stalinist." They advanced comparable positions in relation to the Maoist bureaucracy (denying that it was a caste and labeling its policies as merely "centrist"), and cast doubt on the correctness of the Fourth International's analysis of the stages in the revolution that led to the establishment of a workers state in China. Not stopping here, they brought into question the analyses made by the Fourth International of the development of the workers state in Cuba and of the overturns in Eastern Europe that took place immediately following World War II.

The differences on this level, which still remain to be probed and discussed in detail, are extremely important. They involve nothing less than the main theoretical acquisitions of

the Fourth International since the death of Trotsky. There can hardly be any question as to the necessity of giving top priority to resolving these differences. (Up to now only a discussion on the nature of North Vietnamese Stalinism has been started, and the initiative in this was taken by the editors of the International Socialist Review after a leader of the IMT published a book containing inadmissible concessions to the Stalinism of the North Vietnamese leadership.)

It was agreed at the congress to continue the discussion on other important points of difference. These centered on the relation of party-building tasks to the youth radicalization, the women's liberation movement, and the national liberation movements that have emerged on all continents.

At the last session of the congress, the delegates voted by an overwhelming majority for a nine-point agreement on measures to help maintain the unity of the Fourth International. The agreement was based on a common assessment by the Leninist Trotskyist Faction, the International Majority Tendency, and the Mezhrayonka Tendency that the differences as they had developed up to that point did not justify a split. The nine-point agreement was intended to provide an opportunity for the majority to further test its line of the issues voted upon at the congress, to provide for further discussion on designated issues that had not been taken up at the congress (an internal bulletin of up to forty-eight pages being provided for this purpose), and to counter the tendency observable in some parts of the Fourth International to engage in unjustified splits.

On the latter point, a previous agreement was reaffirmed "That in those countries where two or more groups exist because of splits or other reasons, the united moral authority of the Fourth International be brought to bear for the earliest possible fusion of the groups on a principled basis."

If it had been lived up to, the nine-point agreement would have made it easier to avoid or to handle in a responsible way the subsequent errors that have arisen on the political level such as the IMT's upholding "minority violence" in Spain, the IMT's following an ultraleft course in combating protofascist groups in Britain, and the IMT's course in the May presidential elections in France, which included the opportunist error of urging the workers to vote in the second round for the candidate of the incipient popular front.

But instead of conducting their stewardship of the leading bodies of the Fourth International in accordance with the nine-point agreement, the leaders of the IMT took an opposite course following the world congress.

Narrow Factionalism of the IMT

In the final session of the world congress, they announced that they were setting a ratio of 60 for themselves and 40 for the minority in the number of members to be included in the incoming IEC. This was their right as a majority even though their political resolution was adopted by a ratio of only 53 to 44 mandated votes.

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In the International Executive Committee meeting held the day after the congress, the IMT decided on a still more lopsided proportion for the United Secretariat -- 66 to 33 (with one seat for the Kompass Tendency). This was still their right, although it was an unwise decision. But then they violated Bolshevik norms by insisting on determining in their caucus which individuals the Leninist Trotskyist Faction must include among its representatives on the United Secretariat.

The IMT even went so far as to specifically exclude any representative of the PST in Argentina from participating in the United Secretariat in any regular capacity whatsoever.

The IMT carried this arbitrary procedure still further in determining the composition of the Bureau. The IMT allocated 10 members for itself and only three for the LTF. Moreover, the LTF was not free to determine the composition of the three. At least one had to meet specifications laid down by the IMT.

The decision was accompanied by an ultimatum. If the LTF did not meet the specifications laid down by the IMT, then the IMT would set up a "homogeneous" bureau, excluding the LTF from participation in the day-to-day leadership of the international. In this way the IMT, in its push for monolithism, declared a lockout against the LTF.

This course revived the tensions in the Fourth International that had been allayed at the final session of the congress. It represented a victory for the wing of the IMT that had pressed for a split at the world congress and that had considered approval of the nine-point agreement to be a setback in the pursuit of their objectives.

The Crusade Against the PST

Pursuing their narrow factional course still further, the IMT opened an offensive against the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores in Argentina. In a certain sense this was no more than a continuation of secret factional moves against the PST made in the previous period (the Domingo letter, for instance); but the attacks now took a qualitative turn.

The adherents of the IMT belonging to the Fracción Roja in Argentina attacked the PST publicly. This went as far as publishing parts of the IMT world congress resolution on Argentina denouncing the PST as "syndicalist," "electoralist," "legalist," "centrist," "opportunist," and as following "a political line and practices that are too far from the principles and traditions of our movement." The IMT leaders had pledged to confine these characterizations to internal discussion within the Fourth International. To publish these parts of the resolution, which in effect ruled the PST out of the Fourth International, violated the pledge of the IMT and breached the nine-point agreement.

The IMT offensive has now culminated in a resolution, carried in the United Secretariat by a factional vote, attacking the PST for allegedly signing a class-collaborationist document and participating with several bourgeois parties in presenting it to Perón.

Members of the IFF in the United Secretariat warned of the consequences that could follow from publishing an attack of that kind, since it would force the PST to reply in public. They urged delaying an action of such gravity until further information was obtained and any explanation that the PST might want to make could be heard.

The IMT paid no attention to the warning, and proceeded to publish the resolution. They did so even after the PST had publicly made clear that the facts were altogether different from the assumptions of the IMT and after the PST had made a public correction of material in Avanzada Socialista that gave a contrary impression.

The IMT even published a postscript to the resolution, acknowledging the public rectification made by the PST but brushing this aside as immaterial. The IMT represented their postscript as having been passed by the United Secretariat although it was not considered at all by that body.

What are the objectives of this offensive against the PST? They are transparent. The IMT is seeking to divide the Leninist Trotskyist Faction into pro- and anti-PST wings, and to read the PST -- at present the largest Trotskyist organization in the world -- out of the movement.

Tour Against Canadian Section

The IMT leadership has pursued a similar factional course in Canada. At the beginning of July, Alain Krivine made a tour of that country. He stated flatly that the purpose of his tour was to publicly help the Revolutionary Marxist Group, his factional cothinkers, in opposition to the League for Socialist Action/Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière, the official Canadian section of the Fourth International.

Krivine rejected addressing even a single public meeting sponsored by the LSA/LSO. He rejected addressing a joint meeting called by the LSA/LSO and the RMG. And he pointedly refrained from appealing to the Canadian workers to vote for Kate Alderdice, the candidate of the LSA/LSO in the July 8 federal election. He endorsed only the candidates of the RMG.

Krivine's refusal to support Comrade Alderdice, who was campaigning on a program of revolutionary socialism, caused some astonishment. However, it was only the obverse of his readiness in France to call on the workers to vote for Mitterrand, the popular-front candidate, in the second round.

The Canadian public thus witnessed the spectacle of an international leader of the IMT working to deepen the split between two Trotskyist organizations that had been officially recognized at a world congress of the Fourth International less than five months previously. This was how one IMT leader observed the pledge to bring "moral authority" to bear "for the earliest possible fusion of the groups on a principled basis."

Krivine's action in Canada laid bare the real attitude of leaders of the IMT toward the nine-point agreement passed by the

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world congress to help maintain the unity of the Fourth International. To them it was a scrap of paper.

The IT Split in the United States

The IMT followed a similar course on another front. The American cothinkers of the IMT, organized in the Internationalist Tendency in the Socialist Workers Party, decided to move toward an early split. Among other things, they continued their previous course of failing to maintain their financial obligations to the party and failing to live up to its norms of activity. They went further and decided to disregard party discipline in carrying out trade-union activities and in contacting and working with outside groups, including opponents like the Maoists. Their policy was to recruit directly to their line -- on both American and international questions -- and to keep these recruits outside of the party until they were thoroughly prejudiced against it. They engaged in a public nationwide action of their own on May 11 in open defiance of a tactical course decided on by the Political Committee of the SWP in relation to Chile solidarity work. They set up a complete party structure for their own group, ranging from local branch committees to a political committee and a delegated national convention. They characterized the SWP as "deadly sick" and its cadres as "politically incapable of either understanding or putting into practice a revolutionary line."

All this was done in secrecy. Through "security" measures, the IT sought to deceive the SWP and the YSA as to its decision to flout discipline and to form a separate party structure. Their entire three-month internal preconvention discussion, which was begun immediately after the world congress, was concealed from the party.

The IT split was consummated at its convention. Their course boiled down to practicing "entryism" in relation to the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance.

When the IT engaged in its own nationally coordinated action on May 11, the SWP Control Commission was asked to investigate the matter. The Control Commission uncovered some of the secret discussion documents of the IT stating their objectives and decisions.

The documents themselves showed that the top international leadership of the IMT had discussed these secret documents and the course decided on by the IT. It has been claimed that the IMT leadership disapproved some of the IT's tactics, particularly their holding a delegated national convention. However, at no time did the IMT leaders inform the leadership of the SWP of the split course their cothinkers in the IT had decided on. They maintained strict silence about it, including in the United Secretariat.

The reason for the cover-up was that they agreed with the political objectives, if not all the tactics or the entire organizational course of the IT. They even participated in setting up a secret "North American Bureau," which was placed in

charge of coordinating the factional activities of the IT and the RMG.

Some supporters of the IMT political positions in the SWP resigned from the IT prior to its split convention because they knew the IT's actions were incompatible with membership in the SWP. However, the IMT decided to maintain relations with the IT despite its split convention, and despite the fact that the IT convention voted overwhelmingly to reject the position of the IMT Bureau "on the American situation, the SWP, and the perspectives of the IT...."

The IT's actions were, of course, incompatible with membership in the SWP (or, for that matter, with membership in any section of the Fourth International that abides by the rules of democratic centralism). After the Control Commission had completed its investigation and reported its findings, the Political Committee of the SWP took cognizance of the fact that the IT in furtherance of its split course had set up a dual party structure, placing itself outside of the SWP.

The contrast could hardly be greater between the IT's organization of a split in the SWP and the Tendency's loyal efforts to maintain the unity of the International Marxist Group, the British section of the Fourth International. Despite violations of their democratic rights several years ago, the members of the Tendency have maintained their financial obligations, faithfully carried out assignments, and in all other ways tried to hold to an exemplary standard in abiding by the discipline of the IMG. They have not practiced double recruiting, nor set up sympathizing circles outside of the IMG, not published a secret intra-tendency discussion bulletin with the intention of hiding their real views from the rest of the IMG, nor organized their own delegated convention, nor taken any political initiatives whatsoever that did not accord with the official positions of the IMG. When several members of the Tendency grew tired of spending years in a small minority and resigned from the IMG, all relations with them were cut off at once, and the IMG leadership and the United Secretariat were immediately notified of this step.

Importance of Correct Organizational Methods

The course followed by the IMT in relation to the elected leadership bodies of the international, the PST in Argentina, the LSA/LSO in Canada, and the SWP in the United States has brought the "organizational question" to the fore on an international scale in the clearest and sharpest way. The issue existed previously -- it first emerged with the discovery of the secret Domingo letter -- but it was subordinated by the LTF for the sake of maximum clarity in the political discussion preceding the congress.

The issue was subordinated at that time not because it was unimportant but because of the difficulty of making clear what was involved. It is possible for cadres anywhere in the world to decide where they stand on clearly developed political differences. "Organizational" questions, which most often involve specific actions, are generally difficult to clarify because of

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the extremely concrete circumstances in which they occur. They frequently involve charges and countercharges that are not easy to document in such a way that those in other countries can see precisely what is involved.

The situation has now changed in that respect. Material has become available in such quantity and in such incontrovertible detail that it is possible for every cadre in the world Trotskyist movement to make an independent judgment as to the facts and how they affect the main task facing the Fourth International -- providing decisive aid in building mass parties capable of guiding the socialist revolution to success.

Moreover, the situation has changed in another way. The centrifugal tendency observable in some sections for the past few years has been gaining in force. It threatens to poison and embitter relations, thus jeopardizing an objective discussion on the questions left pending by the Fourth World Congress Since Reunification. And of course, as we noted above, it signifies heightened danger of an international split.

The "organizational question" as it has emerged since the world congress involves party-building methods and democratic centralism in the most concrete way. The IMT has demonstrated in practice what it means by the term "democratic centralism." It is not democratic centralism as taught by Lenin and Trotsky.

The IMT leaders have usurped the Bureau, converting it into a monopoly of their faction. They have reduced the United Secretariat to a formal body that meets in a perfunctory way and that cannot even be relied upon to furnish accurate minutes of its own proceedings.

The IMT leaders do not separate the responsibility of conducting the affairs of the international from their own factional interests. Instead, they equate the two. That is why they fall into the most vulgar factionalism as in the case of Krivine's trip to Canada, or into gross errors as in the case of their public attack on the PST, or into operating behind the backs of national leaderships as in the case of the SWP.

Such methods, which are alien to the tradition of Trotskyism, are highly destructive -- witness the IMT's abrogation of the nine-point agreement, and the way the IMT has escalated tensions and advanced centrifugal tendencies in the international, all in the brief time since the world congress!

The correct practice of democratic centralism -- of the Leninist method of party building -- which has been of central importance in the program of the world Trotskyist movement since the Fourth International was founded in 1938, has now emerged as a key issue in the current crisis in leadership.

That crisis has now become so acute that only a special congress offers hope of a solution. The Leninist Trotskyist Faction concurs with the opinion expressed by the Political Committee of the SWP and proposes convocation of a special congress in accordance with the provisions made for this in the statutes of the Fourth International. Only a congress is capable

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of enacting the measures required to offset the IMT's repudiation in practice of the nine-point agreement that was passed by the last world congress.

The LTF will collaborate in every way possible to help assure the success of such a congress. It urges every cadre in the world Trotskyist movement to join in supporting this call.

August 28, 1974

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October 9, 1974

To the United Secretariat

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is a copy of the statement, "The Need for a Special World Congress," adopted by the steering committee of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction at the end of August. Copies have been sent to the leaderships of the sections and sympathizing organizations of the Fourth International.

At the steering committee meeting, a faction coordinating committee composed of the following members and fraternal observers of the International Executive Committee was elected: Ahmad, Andres, Atwood, Capa, Celso, Crandall, Fireman, Johnson, Josefina, Marcel, Martin, Martinez, Pepe, Roberto, Thérèse, Williams.

Comradely,

s/Mary-Alice

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New York
October 9, 1974

India

Dear Mohan,

Enclosed is a copy of the statement adopted by the steering committee of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction at the meeting held at the end of August. Also enclosed is a copy of the letter to the United Secretariat informing them of the decisions made at the meeting.

It is too bad you and T.T. Roy were not able to be present as the discussions we had were very productive. Due to distance, expense or security problems in their own countries, comrades from New Zealand, Hong Kong, India and several Latin American countries were not able to attend. But otherwise, the representation was quite broad.

The discussion centered around the points that are taken up in the enclosed statement. We discussed the dangers to the unity of the International that have developed as a result of the IMT's intensified factionalism particularly with regard to the PST, the LSA/LSO, and the SWP. There was agreement on the need to fight for a special world congress to take up the question of organizational norms in the International.

There was also considerable discussion on some of the manifestations of the opportunist side of the IMT's political positions (in the French elections and in Spain, for example). But the steering committee agreed overwhelmingly that such opportunist errors do not represent a new departure and the fundamental dynamic of the IMT's line still reflects adaptation to ultraleft pressures, of which there are many examples.

We also discussed the IMT's stepped-up factionalism against the PST. A comrade from Argentina explained the lines along which the PST was planning to reply to the public statement adopted by the United Secretariat majority. (Both the United Secretariat statement and the PST's reply have since been published in the September 9, 1974, issue of Intercontinental Press, the supplement to the September 4 issue of Avanzada Socialista, and elsewhere.)

As you know, the IMT has been on an intensified campaign against the PST since the world congress. The comrades at the meeting felt a need to have speedier and more regular information and discussion on what is happening in Argentina especially. This will put us in the best possible position to answer the IMT's attacks.

The need for more frequent leadership consultation was felt more generally as well. The large size of the LTF steering committee makes it difficult for financial and other practical reasons to meet very often. So it was decided to elect a subcommittee of the IEC members adhering to the LTF to act as a coordinating committee. The composition of the coordinating

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committee is listed in the letter to the United Secretariat. We hope that it will be able to meet every few months.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the steering committee will probably be on the eve of the IEC meeting at the beginning of 1975.

Comradely,

s/Gus Horowitz

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