

New York, N.Y.
April 6, 1974

TO THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE LENINIST-TROTSKYIST FACTION

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed are two important items:

1. A letter from Comrade Silvio Paolicchi, one of the long-time leaders of the Italian section, asking to join the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction. Older comrades may recall that Comrade Silvio was a supporter of the International Committee during the period when the International was split in the 1950s. Italy was one of the few sections where supporters of the International Committee and of the International Secretariat remained in a common organization throughout the period of the split.

Comrade Silvio is the first member of the Italian section to join the LTF.

2. The "Statement of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction" to be attached to the minutes of the world congress. The statement is a reply to the "Statement by the Majority Tendency at the Conclusion of the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International," which was mailed to you a week ago.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice Waters

TRANSLATION

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Milan, 20/3/1974

Dear Comrades,

As you have probably learned from the Argentine comrade who I was able to talk to when he came to Italy for the congress of our section, my breaking from the positions of the majority has been a difficult, slow, and belated process. Only in recent months have I begun to differentiate myself more and more clearly from the majority. And this has had virtually no effect. Although it was clear that my contributions were influenced by your documents, my position seemed to be essentially an individual, personal one, and it was interpreted and considered in this way by Livio and the majority.

The harm that has been done by my delay in siding openly with you is considerable. I have aroused many doubts and second thoughts, but I have not changed the position of one comrade. I was not a delegate at the congress of our section, nor could I attend the world congress.

The reasons for my behavior stem both from the recent past and from further back. In 1969, I voted for the document on Latin America and at the beginning of the pre-congress debate I supported the general line of the European document. Finally, I was implicated in incorrect actions such as publishing the European document in Quarta Internazionale.

But now I have made my decision. At the last meeting of the Central Committee, at which Livio gave a report on the work of the World Congress, I declared my support for the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction. This provoked a brief discussion in which Livio pointed out that my decision might cause some problems in the work of the Political Bureau, of which I am a member. But he concluded cautiously that we would have to let time show whether or not we could continue to work together in the Political Bureau.

Having said this to inform you of my position, I formally request that you consider my application to join the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction. In making this application, I have in mind the ten points of your August 17 program, with which I declare my agreement. I also agree with the documents you put out subsequently, including the political resolution presented to the Congress and the general line of Hansen's document, "The Underlying Differences in Method."

So please decide on my application for membership in the faction. If it is not possible to accept it, please, in any case, let us establish some connection. You can propose the forms of collaboration you think opportune. I think we will find ourselves in agreement.

Hoping for a quick response,
my regards

s/ Silvio Paolicchi

Statement of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction

At a meeting held February 22, that is, a week after the world congress, representatives of the "Majority Tendency" asked representatives of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction if they would agree to the MT attaching a statement to the minutes of the world congress explaining why they had voted for the "Agreement on Measures to Help Maintain the Unity of the Fourth International," the nine points that were adopted at the congress.

The LTF representatives were somewhat surprised at the request. They could see no real need for such a statement, since the nine points had been jointly settled on by representatives of the two sides at a series of meetings at the congress. They held that the agreement spoke for itself and that the main thing now was to put it into practice, a course that would make it possible to relax tensions and facilitate carrying out the daily work of the international.

However, in view of the request of the MT, the LTF representatives stated that they would not object to a statement being attached to the minutes provided that one by the LTF could also be attached in the event that the MT statement proved to be of tendentious nature.

The MT did not have their proposed statement ready since it was still under consideration. It took another three weeks to prepare it, a copy not being given to the LTF until March 17.

These facts are important inasmuch as the MT statement consists of two parts: (1) their reasons for voting for the "Agreement on Measures to Help Maintain the Unity of the Fourth International," and (2) their view of the course followed by the LTF in the four-week period since the world congress, including the three weeks from the time the subject of a possible statement was brought up until a draft was made available.

I.

The relationship of forces in the Fourth International following the discussion preparatory to the world congress was not as pictured in the MT statement. According to the information presented to the Mandates Commission, a total of 5,277 comrades voted for the positions of the International Executive Committee Majority Tendency, while a total of 5,663 voted for the positions of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction, and 245 voted for the positions of the Kompass Tendency or of positions close to them.

The rest of the members, which was a considerable number, either failed to vote or abstained because they were not yet sure about the differences, or, in some sections where supercentralist statutes are in force, were denied the right to vote because of their status as "candidates" (their membership being used nonetheless as part of the basis for mandates at the congress).

It should be noted, too, that the votes of youth groups were not included in these figures, or even registered for the record, although some of them participated actively in the discussion. In general the youth groups that expressed an opinion favored the positions of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction.

As for the mandated votes at the congress, which were weighted in favor of the IECMT because of the abstentions or restrictions, the vote was still only 137 to 125 with 7 abstentions and 1 not voting on the IECMT resolution on Argentina. In other words, the IECMT resolution on Argentina received 50.7 percent of the votes. On the counterposed world political resolutions, which the two sides had mutually agreed should constitute the decisive resolution to determine who held the majority on the incoming International Executive Committee and by what proportion, the vote was 142 for the IECMT resolution, 124 against, and 4 abstentions, giving the IECMT 52.6 percent of the votes.

This outcome reflected a discussion that was far from completed. Besides the inordinate procrastination in translating even the key documents into languages other than English, the distribution of documents did not come up to the norms of the Trotskyist movement, nor did the organization of the discussion in some sections. Certain sections and groups had hardly begun the discussion on the eve of the congress. A resolution with such far-reaching implications as "On the Question of Armed Struggle in Latin America," submitted unilaterally at the last minute by the IECMT as a new point on the agenda of the world congress, was neither discussed nor utilized as a basis for election of delegates in important sections and groups.

To this should be added the disturbing fact that a substantial wing of the IECMT, as revealed by Comrade Barzman and as corroborated by other evidence, had a split orientation.

In view of this situation, the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction felt that the interests of the Fourth International as a whole called for exceptional organizational measures to counteract the centrifugal tendencies and to strengthen the possibility of maintaining the unity of the movement following the congress. Taking the initiative, representatives of the LTF approached some of the leading comrades of the IECMT on this. Their response was positive. They indicated that they had a similar interest in avoiding a split. This led to the joint meetings that worked out the "Agreement on Measures to Help Maintain the Unity of the Fourth International."

In our opinion, the adoption of this agreement by a very large majority, including all but a small wing of the IECMT, augured well for reducing tensions in the international following the congress despite the continued existence of deepgoing differences on various important political and theoretical questions.

The statement which the Majority Tendency submitted March 17 for attachment to the minutes of the congress runs counter to this perspective, in our opinion.

The statement presents the "Agreement on Measures to Help Maintain the Unity of the Fourth International" as a series of organizational concessions granted by the IECMT to counter supposed threats of the LTF to divert the discussion and to demonstrate that "even in the most favorable conditions for the minority" it could not win on the basis of its political positions. The statement describes the concessions as so extensive as to "put some of our organizational principles partially in abeyance," one of the consequences being that the concessions "can make the development of our movement more difficult in certain cases."

This contrasts with the position of the LTF, which we thought was shared by the MT, that the nine points would help maintain the unity of the Fourth International.

Not once does the statement indicate that the organizational compromises were jointly reached in the interests of the movement as a whole. It makes no mention whatsoever of the considerable organizational concessions yielded by the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction for the sake of avoiding a split and strengthening the unity of the movement.

It passed by in silence, for example, the concession made by the leadership of the Canadian section giving the status of "sympathizing group" to an opposing formation that had just fostered a split in the section. That concession was accorded only after the most careful consideration. Of all the blows dealt at the congress to the Fourth International's concept of the integrity of sections, this was the gravest one. The Canadian comrades agreed to make the concession only because the IECMT had given every intimation that the decision might well determine whether a split occurred at the world congress.

The MT statement says nothing at all about the rather notable fact that the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction acquiesced in granting only the status of "sympathizing group" to the largest party in the Fourth International, the PST of Argentina, which had upheld the program of Trotskyism and applied it in the class struggle in an exemplary way during the years when the official section was preparing to desert. In this instance, too, the IECMT placed inordinate importance on the organizational concession, which was why it was consented to.

In its listing of organizational complaints and grievances, the MT statement singles out the fact that in accordance with the formulas followed in the nine-point agreement, the LCR-ETA(VI) in Spain and the GCI in Mexico were not recognized as sections. But it was the leaders of the IECMT who insisted on the formula applied in these cases. The LTF representatives argued for a more objective formula. That is, in countries where splits had occurred, they proposed recognizing the largest group as the section. This would have meant recognition as sections for the LCR-ETA(VI) and the GCI among others. The IECMT leaders rejected this formula for reasons they did not explain to us but which we assume they made clear to their caucus. Presumably their recommendations were approved by the membership of the caucus.

The MT statement names two sympathizing groups, "the Brazilian Ponto de Partida and the Iranian group," whose "political weight and representativeness are highly dubious." These two groups appear to have been singled out for this qualification on grounds of their agreement with the political positions of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction. It is to be noted that groups that supported the IECMT are not singled out and characterized in this way although such a procedure would certainly be called for if one were to apply the same criteria to both sides. It appears to us that it is not in the best interests of the Trotskyist movement as a whole to subject groups of sincere and devoted cadres facing totalitarian conditions like those in Brazil and Iran to such invidious treatment.

The same goes for the subject of payment of dues. A number of sections and sympathizing groups are badly in arrears in dues. This is a serious question and warrants serious handling. To single out the PST in this respect while saying nothing about the others reveals an attitude that is not even-handed, to say the least.

Perhaps the worst instance of this factional approach is the decision to pillory the PRT of Uruguay as "a particular disgrace to the Fourth International." This is an echo of vile insinuations that were vigorously answered on the floor of the congress. To resume factional mudslinging immediately following the congress can only arouse the gravest doubts as to the motives of those engaging in it.

The gratuitous remarks concerning the Mezhrayonka Tendency fall into the same pattern. In reality the participation of the representatives of the Mezhrayonka Tendency in the discussion at the world congress furthered the clarification of issues. The MT, however, seems to frown on the formation of "small" tendencies that try to take an independent stand and to think for themselves. This reflects a supercentralist concept of the international that tends to carry over from the organizational level to the sphere of political opinion.

The heavy stress in the statement on the "unchallengeable majority" held by the MT deserves attention. First of all, the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction did not challenge the outcome of the vote. As we stated at various times in advance of the congress, we expected that under the circumstances the IECMT would emerge with a majority. All we can add is that we were astonished at the slimness of that majority. Apparently the narrowness of their base is now a source of some worry to the MT, which would explain both their sensitivity on this question and their current course of action, including the nature of the statement they decided to append to the minutes.

They now "categorically challenge" the 72 mandates of the PST recognized by the Mandates Commission at the congress. They registered no such protest in the Mandates Commission. That was because both sides had agreed in advance not to challenge mandates. The agreement to refrain from challenges was reached with the objective of helping to center the discussion on the political issues in dispute and to prevent the discussion from bogging down on procedural or narrow organizational questions. This decision--reached in common--was correct in our opinion. In the absence of such an agreement, it is certain that the surprising number of mandates claimed by some of the groups supporting the IECMT would have been challenged by the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction.

On the basis of their narrow ratio of 53 to 46 in mandated votes, which, as the figures presented to the Mandates Commission show, did not reflect the majority vote cast by the cadres of the Fourth International for the positions of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction, the MT leaders decided to set a ratio of 60 for their side and 40 for the other side on their slate for the incoming International Executive Committee. This ratio was picked unilaterally in their caucus.

On the basis of that unilateral caucus decision, they decided to set a still more disproportionate ratio of 66 to less than 33 for the United Secretariat (14 seats for the IMT, "five or six" for the LTF, plus one for the Kompass Tendency). On top of this, they violated Bolshevik norms by insisting on determining in their caucus which individuals among its elected IEC members the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction must include among its representatives.

The members of the International Executive Committee adhering to the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction objected to this undemocratic procedure and voted against it. Nevertheless, in the interest of doing everything possible to maintain the unity of the movement, the LTF made some nominations. These were rejected by the MT as unacceptable. The LTF then asked for time to attempt to work out the necessary arrangements for possible additional nominations. This was granted by the representatives of the MT, although with evident reluctance.

II.

At the March 16 meeting of the United Secretariat, the representatives of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction reported that they were working on the problem of additional nominations to meet the difficult conditions laid down by the Majority Tendency as to the composition of their representation on the United Secretariat.

They were then confronted with a new problem. The MT representatives on the United Secretariat stated that they had decided on the following composition for the Bureau, which handles the day-to-day work of the international between sessions of the United Secretariat: For the MT, 10 members; for the LTF 3 members.

But the LTF was not to freely select three comrades among their representatives who had been elected to the United Secretariat. At least one had to meet specifications laid down by the MT as to "political level" and "authoritativeness." If this ultimatum was not met, then none of the three could serve on the Bureau. The MT would go ahead and set up a "homogeneous" Bureau, cutting off the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction completely from participation in the day-to-day leadership of the international.

The representatives of the LTF voted against this anti-Leninist procedure. As a consequence, the three members of the United Secretariat selected by the LTF to participate in the work of the Bureau, Hugo Blanco, Marcel, and Johnson, were rejected as not meeting MT specifications, and the MT set up a Bureau consisting solely of their own members.

References to this turn of events are included in the final two paragraphs of the MT statement, which was handed to the LTF the following day. Summing up the four-week period following the world congress, the MT leaders aver that "the minority faction has refused--up to now--to accept joint responsibility for the day-to-day leadership of the International."

They characterize this alleged refusal as reflecting "a federalist concept of the International which contradicts the statutes and the line adopted by the World Congress."

The MT--within four weeks!--is already suggesting that the LTF is guilty of violating the statutes and the line of the world congress. What does this show about their course?

The only possible interpretation of such astonishing assertions is that the leaders of the MT have decided to try to provoke a heightening of tensions within the international.

They do not assume responsibility for this course, making it out to be a legitimate reaction to "this exceptional situation that arose in the aftermath of the Tenth World Congress." The "exceptional" postcongress situation resulting from their own handiwork is turned to further account. It is utilized as part of their justification for a decision "not to dissolve and to continue to function as a centralized international tendency."

What they mean by functioning as a centralized international tendency is shown in practice by their factional actions in the aftermath of the congress, inflating their majority in the leading bodies of the international to the point of setting up a "homogeneous" Bureau and excluding the LTF from participating in the day-to-day leadership of the international unless an anti-Leninist demand is met as to the qualifications of its representatives.

The LTF had hoped for a course in consonance with the spirit of the "Agreement on Measures to Help Maintain the Unity of the Fourth International." As the LTF announced at the congress, its own course had been aimed at reducing tensions so as to facilitate putting the agreement into practice.

The MT appears to have decided on a different course, as their statement itself shows. That does not bode well for working relations in the coming period. We regret that the MT decided to make such provocative moves.

April 3, 1974