

November 27, 1974

Japan

Dear Comrade Sakai,

Thank you for the copy of your Political Bureau statement concerning the developments involving the Internationalist Tendency. We have sent it to our National Committee.

If you plan to publish a special bulletin on the question of the IT split, I would suggest that in addition to the items you mentioned in your letter that you consider including three of the key items from the SWP IIB No. 6:

"Resignation from the IT by Berta Langston and Bob Langston," pp. 24-32.

"First National Conference of the Internationalist Tendency," by Alec, pp. 24-39.

"A Reply to Comrade Massey from Los Angeles," pp. 93-96.

I realize that this involves additional translating. But it is important, I believe, to read what prominent members of the IT themselves have said about their policies and methods of functioning. That will enable comrades to best judge whether the conclusions drawn by the SWP Political Committee are justified.

I would like to add a few comments concerning the statement of the JRCL Political Bureau, which raises objections to the procedure followed by the SWP in this case. To answer these objections, I think it is useful to deal with three distinct questions that are raised, implicitly or explicitly, by your statement: 1. Did the SWP follow correct procedure, according to its constitution, in not holding a trial? 2. Even if the SWP's procedure was correct, was it still advisable in this case to hold a trial? 3. Did the absence of a trial violate international norms of democratic centralism?

1. Did the SWP follow correct procedure? A trial is not the only constitutionally designated form for dealing with infractions of the SWP constitution or its organizational principles. The SWP constitution also provides for a Control Commission. It is composed of four rank-and-file members elected by the national convention and one National Committee member designated by the National Committee. According to the SWP constitution, the authority of the Control Commission "shall supersede any local investigation or trial."

As you can see, the procedure followed in relation to the IT was correct: it conformed to the SWP constitution.

It is also worth noting that neither a trial body nor a Control Commission has the power to take any action. These bodies carry out an investigation to determine the facts and then report their findings to the appropriate party unit for action. A trial held on a branch level, for example, would report its findings back to the branch for action. In the case of a Control

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Commission investigation, our constitution states that the Control Commission "shall present its findings to the Political Committee for action."

The procedure followed in this regard also conforms to the SWP constitution.

2. Was it advisable to hold a trial in this case? Trial proceedings are designed to deal with individual violations of discipline in cases where the charges are denied. The accused have the right to confront their accusers, and can attempt to show that the allegations are untrue or unsubstantiated. The purpose of a trial is to establish the facts, that is, to determine if a violation of discipline has occurred. Then, if such a violation has been established at a trial, it is up to the appropriate party unit to decide whether disciplinary action is warranted, and, if so, to decide upon such action.

We faced a different situation in relation to the IT. The Control Commission was called in after the May 11 actions of the IT revealed a nationally coordinated pattern of violations of discipline. There was no dispute over what had happened. In fact, when Bill Massey spoke before the SWP National Committee plenum in June, he said as much: "...since there is no facts in dispute or it hasn't been brought out, since we've taken the position that we've done what you have charged that we have done, we admit that and take responsibility for it, we don't promise to discontinue it at all, there is no need for an investigation to establish what the facts are." (page 131, Internal Information Bulletin, No. 6 in 1974).

Clearly what was involved was more than a matter of an individual case or cases of infraction of discipline. What was called for was not a trial, but a Control Commission investigation to try to find out what was involved.

The Control Commission examined a considerable amount of evidence. In the course of this investigation, the Control Commission examined secret documents of the IT, which showed that the IT was really a rival party, and not a legitimate tendency or faction abiding by the SWP's organizational principles. The Control Commission decided that the secret IT material "was sufficient by itself to enable us to arrive at the conclusions and recommendations that appear below" (my emphasis).

A trial might have been advisable if there had been a question as to the facts upon which these conclusions were based -- i.e. if there had been a question as to the authenticity of the secret IT documents. But this was never in question.

Given that the documents were genuine, all that was left to do was to evaluate them; that is, did the documents show the IT to be a tendency or faction compatible with the organizational principles of the SWP, or did they show it to be an opponent formation doing entry work inside the SWP?

The proper body to decide such a question is the Political Committee or National Committee.

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The IT documents described the policies and methods of functioning of the IT. The IT has argued that it had the right to operate in the manner it did. This was not a denial of facts, but a challenge to the organizational principles of the SWP.

We would not argue with the IT over whether the organizational principles of the SWP are valid; and we certainly would not convene a trial as the place to conduct such an argument. A trial cannot rule on the validity of the SWP's organizational principles. These are established by convention vote, and can be changed only by convention vote. If someone wished to argue, for example, that the SWP's rules governing party-youth relations should be changed, then they must do so at a convention and the preceding discussion period. In the meantime, however, they must abide by these rules.

I believe that the above considerations answer the JRCL Political Bureau statement that the SWP Political Committee "did not give the IT and its members any opportunity to defend itself and themselves from the charges in the 'Report of the Control Commission of the Socialist Workers Party' at any CC and PC meetings before the July 4 decision."

Furthermore, the Control Commission questioned Massey and Barzman about the structure and nature of the IT. But as soon as Massey and Barzman were asked questions in this regard, including such a simple one as whether the IT had a steering committee, they refused to answer! (see page 129.) Their refusal to answer was in itself a violation of the SWP constitution, which states that "it shall be obligatory on every member of the Party to furnish the Control Commission or its authorized representatives with any information they may require."

The reason why Massey and Barzman refused to collaborate with the Control Commission is clear: they knew that they had a lot to hide.

3. Did the absence of a trial violate international norms of democratic centralism? Of course you are aware that reactionary legislation prohibits the SWP from belonging to the Fourth International, and therefore the statutes of the International have no binding powers on the SWP. But even so, the SWP's procedure was not in contradiction with the statutes or norms of the International. According to article 31 of the statutes, the national sections "determine their own statutes," and I have already explained how the procedure followed was in strict accordance with the constitution of the SWP.

If any question of procedure is to be raised at all, it should not be around this particular case, but around the statutes of the SWP. Are the program, constitution, and organizational principles of the SWP "in general conformity with the program and statutes of the Fourth International" as is stipulated in article 31?

The answer, of course, is "yes." The SWP constitution and organizational principles have existed for a long time. Up to the present instance they have never been challenged by anyone in the international.

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We would welcome a discussion on the SWP's organizational principles. They are the principles of a Leninist combat party. They also represent the experience of many years in the struggle to build the kind of party required to lead the American socialist revolution to success. The "American Theses" of 1946 and our political resolutions of 1969 and 1971 outline our concept of the nature of the American revolution, and these documents should be read in conjunction with our 1965 resolution on organizational principles.

Perhaps the international will engage in a discussion on the American question as well as on democratic centralism. Clearly, however, such a discussion involves much broader questions than the procedure followed in the specific case of the IT.

But aside from such a discussion, there are two points that ought to be noted about this particular case.

First, with regard to article 29 and article 43 of the statutes, which are cited in the statement of the JRCL Political Bureau. The purpose of these articles is to guarantee the accused the right to defend themselves in cases where the facts are in dispute. However, as I have already explained, that was not involved in this case. Consequently neither of these articles is appropriate to the particular case of the IT.

Second, and most important, this was not strictly speaking a disciplinary action. Article 29 and article 43 deal with disciplinary actions. Their purpose is to guard the rights of individual members charged with specific violations of discipline. But what was really involved in this case was a political evaluation, not a disciplinary procedure.

We were faced with an extraordinary situation: the discovery of a completely autonomous rival party-like organization doing entry work inside the SWP along with autonomous external work. The proper way to deal with this situation was through a political action by the PC, not a trial.

Was the lack of a trial in this instance unprecedented? Not in the history of the SWP, nor in the history of the international. Sections are occasionally confronted with situations in which a group decides to split, but does not wish to take the formal initiative. So it provokes its own expulsion. The case of the IT was unusual only because of the form it took. Instead of provoking an expulsion through committing a specific act of indiscipline (although they did commit many such acts), they engaged in a tactical variety of entryism sui generis. When this was discovered, the SWP simply took the appropriate political response.

Our attitude can be summed up as follows: when a group is formed that considers the SWP "degenerate," when that group sets itself up as a rival organization with an internal discipline higher than that of the SWP, when that group practices entryism sui generis in our party (with the perspective of splitting openly at a moment of its own choosing), the whole objective being to do as much damage as possible to the SWP, then they can expect a political response such as previous similar groups have

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As to our evaluation of the nature of the IT. I believe that an objective study of the IT documents will lead inescapably to the following conclusions:

1. The IT regarded the SWP as degenerate and beyond reform. They said that the cadre of the SWP was "politically incapable of either understanding or putting into practice a revolutionary line."

2. The IT regarded itself as the "nucleus of the future section of the Fourth International in the United States."

3. The primary orientation of the IT was to build its own organization. This was to be done through a policy combining entry work inside the SWP with independent IT work outside the SWP.

4. The IT set up an organizational structure designed to achieve these tasks -- not the structure of a legitimate tendency or faction.

5. The IT rejected the organizational principles of the SWP. The policy of the IT was to violate the discipline of the SWP whenever it considered it to be necessary to advance its own aims. This policy was camouflaged because of the need to maintain entryism sui generis. In conjunction with this, the IT operated under a "security policy" with regard to the SWP.

6. The IT had the perspective of openly declaring a split from the SWP in the not distant future. Strong sentiment existed within the IT to speed up the split. However, at the May 1974 convention of the IT it was decided to persevere in the entry tactic a while longer. There were two reasons: (a) to facilitate carrying out a factional raid on the YSA; (b) to facilitate arguing inside the IMT for adoption of the IT's evaluation of the SWP. (The RMG of Canada also pledged its support to this "struggle within the IMT to break it of illusions concerning the SWP.")

Further evidence of the correctness of the SWP Political Committee's evaluation is shown by the course of the IT since July 4. The IT continues to reject the organizational principles of the SWP and has been continuing its work with groups that are political opponents of the SWP. Some of its earlier work with these opponents is described in the Control Commission report.

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Was the action taken by the SWP Political Committee politically justified and politically correct? In my opinion this has to be considered from two interrelated points of view: national and international.

From the point of view of constructing a revolutionary Marxist party in any country, no Leninist organization can permit a minority to arrogate to itself the prerogatives the IT sought

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to seize.

What about the SWP Political Committee action from the perspective of the best interests of building the Fourth International today? Did our action harm the unity of the international movement? I don't think so. The dangers of a split or deepening of the divisions stem not from our actions, but from the split course charted by the IT, and especially from the possibility that their line and conduct will be condoned by a majority of the international leadership.

That is why we have been so insistent in warning of the dangers that flow from the IMT's methods of leadership functioning. The IMT's secret factionalism encourages the growth of cliques and unprincipled political combinations that are impelled to violate Leninist organizational norms.

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The upcoming IEC will probably be discussing the organizational questions posed by the IMT's complicity with the IT split. But we do not think that the IEC meeting is a substitute for a special world congress. A world congress is the only recourse at this point, precisely because all the leadership bodies of the international have been compromised by the IMT's methods of secret factional functioning. Such a congress can call the split-minded factionalists to order and recognize the importance of maintaining Leninist organizational norms in our movement. This is the only hope of reversing the drive toward a deepening split.

It is not necessary to wait for an IEC meeting or to hear the results of an international control commission investigation before deciding whether a special world congress is needed. The importance of the internal crisis in the international justifies calling such a congress. According to the statutes the congress can be called by one third of the sections, by the IEC, or by the United Secretariat, acting for the IEC.

I fail to understand how a special world congress would "serve to deepen the danger of a split of the Fourth International," as the JRCL Political Bureau states. A world congress, after all, which is the highest body of the Fourth International, is surely not an irresponsible body. It is certainly not a less responsible place for serious discussion than less authoritative bodies. In fact, things have gone so far that it is not possible to resolve the crisis in less authoritative bodies -- especially since the IMT majority on the United Secretariat and IEC have been compromised by complicity in the IT split.

Of course you are right that a world congress could not act as a control commission. We do not propose this. We propose a political discussion on the organizational principles that guide the Fourth International. We now have a wealth of experience to provide the basis for this absolutely necessary discussion. Only if Leninist organizational norms are reestablished on the basis of such a discussion will we be able to preserve the unity of our movement and continue the political and theoretical discussion on other issues of utmost importance.

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Finally, I want to take up your point 4, concerning the speedy printing of the IIB No. 6, which was available on July 4.

I must admit that I find this argument rather strange as there is nothing very extraordinary about the fact that we were able to get the bulletin out so rapidly.

Of the 146-page bulletin, only 6 pages consist of Political Committee material. The rest is the report of the Control Commission, which had been collecting material and preparing its report since June 20. Once all the documentation was at hand, the technical preparation of the bulletin was facilitated by the fact that most of it consists of photographic reproductions of documents. Such reproduction involves very little time to prepare, as I'm sure you are aware. The bulletin, in fact, was completed in two days.

Of course, this meant that work on the bulletin was begun prior to the July 4 Political Committee decision concerning the IT. There is nothing unusual or improper in this.

The decision to proceed in this way was made by the Political Committee itself. On July 2, the Political Committee met and received the report of the Control Commission. The proposed Political Committee motions and the line of the statement of the Political Committee were also discussed, and general agreement was reached. It was decided to prepare the Control Commission report and the Political Committee motions and statement for publication. Because of the importance of the matter, it was decided to postpone final decision for two days more in order to have time to consider it carefully. In the meantime it was agreed that work on the bulletin should proceed. On July 4, the PC met and made its decision. We were able to mail out the bulletins on the same day.

I hope this explains the "mystery" for you. We frankly admit that we made an effort to get the bulletins into the mail as rapidly as possible. We wanted to inform comrades of what had been decided and make the written record available in order to forestall rumors. We hardly think that is worthy of repro- bation or condemnation!

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Well, I hope I have covered the main points that your Political Bureau was concerned with. Actually, I started out simply to acknowledge receipt of your statement and thank you for sending us a copy right away, but as I reread it, I thought it worth drafting a longer reply to some of the points you raise.

Comradely,

s/Mary-Alice