

May 21, 1976

To Leninist-Trotskyist Faction Coordinators

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed are the following items:

1. A letter and document from Siegfried Kreisler on the discussion in the Gruppe Internationale Marxisten concerning the coming federal elections in Germany.
2. A statement by the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency in the GIM written for the March 1976 convention. (Translated from Rundbrief No. 30, the internal bulletin of the GIM).
3. A letter from the three members of the LTF in the Italian section to the Political Bureau announcing the formation of a tendency.
4. A report on the February 1976 convention of the Revolutionaere Socialisters Forbund, Danish section of the Fourth International.
5. A letter from Hugo Blanco to Mary-Alice Waters.
6. Further correspondence concerning the article by Richardo Hernández between Ernest Mandel and Joseph Hansen. (The article and a letter by Joseph Hansen on it were included in the April 21 LTF mailing.)

Comradely,

Caroline Lund

LETTER FROM SIEGFRIED KREISCHER

Frankfurt, May 3, 1976

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed find for your information a document written by Comrade Urs from Frankfurt and myself. Comrade Urs was a leader of the now dissolved "Tendency 3" during the last pre-convention discussion and former organization secretary of the GIM. The document proposes to the GIM Central Committee running GIM candidates in the upcoming federal elections in combination with critical support for the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany).

A few words may be required regarding the background of this development and the positions against which our proposal was directed.

One of the strangest facts which characterized the pre-convention discussion until the beginning of March has been that no formation in the GIM laid open its position in regard to the federal elections--except the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency. The huge documents submitted by the "Block" (consisting of Kompass plus a wing of the former IT) and by Tendency 3 didn't say a single word about them. This meant that the central political event in 1976 in the Federal Republic was not dealt with by the convention. The LTT's analysis already at that time was that the unprincipled nature of these formations made them incapable of giving concrete answers to the most important challenges facing our section. The validity of this analysis was revealed in a spectacular way a few weeks after the convention.

Elected without a clear political mandate, the new leadership--which consists of an overwhelming "Block" majority--was bound to decide this question at the first plenary session of the Central Committee on April 10-11. Up to a week before the CC meeting the position of the majority was unclear. Comrade Karl had been charged with writing a resolution, and since he refused to reveal his position even to the Political Bureau, the confusion was considerable.

Meanwhile we heard that in private discussions comrade Urs had put forward the position to run GIM candidates and give critical support for the SPD. This was real news to us since it had been comrade Urs who led the majority of the IT in 1975, which was against critical support for the SPD in opposition to the Mintoff-led minority of the IT, which favored this position. So we decided to contact him and tried to convince him that if we hold a position in common, we should write a common resolution and fight together for it. To our surprise, after a few days we received a positive answer.

During our first discussions it became clear that there was a sufficient basis for our project, but certain reefs

to be sailed around nevertheless. For example comrade Urs is a strong adherent to the theory of the new "workers vanguard," towards which we should orient. But since the formulations in the resolution aren't explicitly wrong and didn't affect the position we held in common, I decided not to let this stand in the way of the project. Another problem was the judgment on the sorry record of the past electoral activity of the GIM, in which comrade Urs had not played merely a minor role. This was able to be solved satisfactorily. The document contains a clear break with such policy and an honest self-criticism on his part. This is more than we could have expected to achieve.

A couple of days before the CC meeting the document of Karl appeared. It proposed to put up GIM candidates--and let it go at that. Immediately thereafter the "Block" broke apart. Almost the whole Kompass refused to go along with Karl. Comrade Felix (Kompass, PB) wrote a contribution in which he strongly objects to the running of GIM candidates on the grounds that this would interfere with our top priority: factory work, and that the GIM is still too small an organization for running candidates.

At the CC meeting itself it turned out that except for two comrades, all Kompass CC members voted for Felix. Karl's resolution was carried with 15 votes against 14. The resolution by Urs and myself got 6 votes (to this two comrades must be added who had to leave before the vote was taken).

It is not yet clear whether this decision by the CC will be put into practice. The majority of the PB is determined to launch the election campaign at a Was Tun festival on May 2, but the "Block" minority is reportedly collecting signatures for an extraordinary national conference to reverse the decision. The existence of these tensions alone makes it doubtful that a successful election campaign can be carried out, not to speak of the lacking political clarity.

Whatever will be the outcome of the power fight inside the majority, from our point of view there was progress made in one respect: for the first time the position the LTT has been proposing for several years--critical support for the Social Democracy and running candidates when possible--has found a real hearing in the organization. It was a whole wing of the leadership which argued and voted for this position, which only a few weeks ago was still regarded as the crackpot fantasy of some well-known right wingers. It has helped the LTT to loosen up its isolation a little bit.

Whether cooperation with supporters of this position can be continued is doubtful, but remains to be seen. There is the possibility that in regard to the woman's liberation movement, which will be on the agenda of the next convention June 6-7, cooperation will be possible.

questions, such as: Does this step really point toward an end to the tendency fights which have deeply marked the situation in the GIM since the fall of 1973? Do we finally have a clear majority for a clear line? On the occasion of the coming GIM national conference we would like to 1) explain how we evaluate the current situation in the GIM and 2) concretize and update the basis of the LTT.

The Background

The present political differences and tendency struggles began with the debate within the Fourth International. The orientation of the third congress since reunification (ninth world congress) in Latin America and its extension to other areas contributed considerably to the German section adopting ultraleft policies. This miseducation of the German Trotskyist cadres was shown, for example, in the split-off of a sizeable part of the Hamburg GIM/RKJ.¹ The reason for this group leaving, as one of their leaders explained, lay in the inconsistency of the Fourth International, which was indeed propagandizing for armed struggle in Latin America, but was, however, incapable of applying this to West Germany and Europe. This ultra-left turn led to the conducting of the most important RKJ campaign, that is, Indochina solidarity work, under the slogan, "For the Victory of the Vietnamese Revolution!" a slogan which was intended to be agitational (see the balance sheet on this from Luko Willms, Rundbrief No. 1, Neue Series, April, 1974.)

If in fact the misorientation of the 1969 world congress significantly contributed to the ultraleft mistakes of the German section, the line of the 1974 world congress represented a continuation and systematization of ultraleft policies for the GIM. The European Perspectives Document became, in 1973, the first program of the German section after the fusion of the GIM and the RKJ. The results of these policies were, among others:

*The Denigration of work among youth and the rejection of a youth organization, although the section was essentially built through one.

*The drying-up of the Chile campaign because of the effort to transform the Chile Committees into propagandistic subsidiaries of the GIM.

*The slogan, "Vote Revolutionary Candidates!" (what was meant were the KBW and KPD)² and the refusal to give critical support to the mass party of the West German working class--the SPD--in the Landtag elections.

¹RKJ--Revolutionäre Kommunistische Jugend, Revolutionary Communist Youth, the youth organization of the GIM which existed from 1970 until the two organizations merged in December, 1970 (translator's note)

²KBW and KPD--two Maoist groups (translator's note)

³This amendment made it illegal to "advocate" an illegal act. (translator's note)

*A passive attitude regarding the priority task of Trotskyists in the Federal Republic today--the struggle against the abrogation (i. e., reduction of) of democratic rights (against the banning of radicals from public service, against the penal code amendment³ and against the constant threats regarding the banning of organizations of the workers movement).

In the course of the unfolding of these policies three tendencies were formed in the GIM in 1973, which adopted different attitudes towards the orientation of the 1969 and 1974 world congresses: The Internationalist Tendency defended it. The Compass Tendency developed criticisms in several important areas, specifically regarding the guerrilla orientation for Latin America and on the concept of the "new mass vanguard" (NMV). The Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency was opposed to the misorientation of the 1969 and 1974 world congresses and took up, especially within the GIM, the task of working out an alternative to this orientation.

The course of the Compass Tendency has shown in the meantime that unfortunately it didn't succeed in posing an alternative to the policy of orientating towards the "new mass vanguard". A dangerous indication regarding this was its persistence in breaking with the traditional characterization of the SPD by the Fourth International. But it becomes even clearer in the Compass Tendency's uncritical attitude towards the International Majority Tendency's position on Portugal, over which the most important debate in the history of the reunified international is being conducted.

The Political Differences in the GIM have by no Means Been Clarified

The above is the one and only conclusion which can be drawn from the experience of the past few months. Given here are only a few examples which are telling for the current situation in the GIM.

The only resolution that was passed by a majority at the 1975 national conference, "The Crisis of Social Democracy and the Tasks of Revolutionary Marxists" (Die Internationale, No. 8, Dec. 1975), was declared de facto null and void by the section's statement on the Bremen elections in the Was Tun. After an especially lengthy and vehement discussion on the character of the SPD, without a doubt a central question for West German revolutionary Marxists, the GIM took an unequivocal position at its national conference in March, 1975. Without determining a concrete tactic for elections, it unambiguously characterized the SPD as a "bourgeois workers party," that is, a party of the workers' movement which has bourgeois politics and which differs qualitatively from the bourgeois parties, CDU/CSU and FDP. In opposition to this the majority of the Political Bureau carried out a different position in practice.

Of course the majority of the Political Bureau, which had voted for the above-mentioned resolution in March,

had the right to change its opinion. However, the way the new position was applied in practice was irresponsible. The question here is not only that the Political Bureau simply can't annul the decisions of a national conference without further adieu. It is also a question of what this way of acting signifies regarding the clarification of political differences in the GIM. What convinced the majority in the Political Bureau that the position adopted by the GIM national conference was untenable? Do differences between those PB members who supported this resolution before and the Compass tendency still exist on the SPD question? No one knows, least of all the membership of the GIM. To what purpose does the GIM discuss and make decisions, if a position passed by a majority can suddenly be declared invalid in practice?

A further indication that up until now there has been no political clarity in the GIM is the continuing existence of the Compass Tendency, even after it has formed a block with former leaders of the IT. This block has published a draft for a political resolution of the GIM. As a rule, any political resolution worthy of the name, takes a position on all questions important to the policies of the GIM. On what does the Compass Tendency base the necessity of a separate block? What are the political differences which still exist between the Compass Tendency and the former leaders of the IT who collaborated in the drafting of a new political resolution with Compass? The membership of the GIM has not as yet received an answer to these questions.

A third example are the former IT comrades who supported Crues' paper (see Rundbrief No. 22, Nov. 1975). These comrades claim to be the genuine representatives of the line of the European Perspectives Document. But they also explain openly and honestly that they are "probably too heterogeneous, too politically and theoretically unqualified . . . to actually counterpose" to the Block "what we are striving for, a real political alternative."

This honesty and lack of concealment of actual existing differences of opinion is the correct approach to discussion and the formation of tendencies in a Bolshevik organization. The comrades should not be criticized for that. It should only be noted at this point that even among those who claim to be the genuine representatives of the EPD line, lack of clarity exists on what the EPD line is. It must at least be confirmed (determined) that the EPD, which was passed in 1973 as the first program of the unified GIM/RKJ, allows for many different interpretations.

Thus, up until now, the dissolution of the IT and the block formation have not brought us one step further towards clarification of the political differences.

The tendency struggles in the German section have existed since the fall of 1973. Their vehemence and depth are evidence of the extent of the problems of the organization. However, the tendencies were founded in order to

contribute towards the solution of these problems. If the discussion is conducted openly without important political differences being kept quiet for the sake of the "unity" of a tendency, if the leadership of the section encourages the discussion process and doesn't view it as counterposed to the carrying-out of campaigns the GIM has decided upon, and if the discussion is connected to a testing-out in practice, then the tendency struggles will lead to a genuine political clarification in the GIM which alone can make possible qualitative progress in the construction of the organization. The problems are there. They cannot in any way be administratively effaced. Political clarification must be the highest priority.

In the face of this state of affairs, there was particular reason to object to the original dates for the coming national conference. Although the opening date for the discussion period according to the 16-Point Agreement of the 1975 national conference, Nov. 1, 1975, wasn't observed, at first it was insisted that the cut-off date for the discussion proposed in the same agreement remain the same. In addition to this decision several other practices of the majority leadership already existed which impeded the discussion:

*The publication and distribution of bulletins. If it's true that this is sloppily handled as a rule, documents of minorities are particularly slighted. A significant portion never appear or are lost (see documentation in Organisations - Rundbrief, No. 99 of Jan. 13, 1976).

*The decision to no longer translate and publish international bulletins. Since March, 1974 not only have bulletins from world congresses remained untranslated, but almost all international bulletins including the entire discussion on Argentina and the Argentine sympathizing organization of the Fourth International, the PST, have not been made available to the members of the GIM.

After several protests from branches, the majority leadership decided after all to postpone the national conference. It is to be hoped that concrete steps to improve the publication of bulletins and the translation of international bulletins will follow this decision.

Every single comrade carries responsibility for the politics of the GIM, not only in relation to their practical application, but also for their working-out. Attentiveness towards the discussion on program and active participation in it are prerequisites for fruitful results.

New Platform of the LTT

Up until now the platform of the LTT consisted of the general line of the following documents:

1) "For a Process of Political Clarification in the GIM" (Rundbrief No. 1, Sonderreihe, Oct., 1973)

2) "For a Strong and Independent Women's Movement," draft resolution of the provisional Women's Commission, by Elke, Gisela, and Ingrid (Rundbrief No. 8, Sonderreihe, Jan., 1974)

3) "Draft of a GIM Resolution on Youth" by Richard (Rundbrief No. 8, Sonderreihe, Jan., 1974)

4) "The German Trade Union Movement and the Tasks of West German Trotskyists" by Dieter (Rundbrief No. 17 Sonderreihe, Mar. 1974)

5) "Theses on Social Democracy" by Siegfried Kreisler (Rundbrief No. 1, Neue Serie, Jan., 1975)

6) "The Chile Campaign of the GIM--an Analysis and an Alternative," by Reiner (Rundbrief No. 13, Jan. 1975)

7) "Political Resolution of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency" (Rundbrief No. 13, Jan. 1975)

We still consider the general line of these documents to be correct. If the GIM had adopted them at the time it would have been in a much better initial position for carrying out the current campaigns. The resolution on the women's movement, for example, is very instructive for the current abortion work. However, these old documents are just that--old documents. In particular we have attempted in the resolution, "The Political Situation in West Germany and the Tasks of the GIM," to elaborate the fundamental ideas of these resolutions and to apply them to the current situation.

The following is the new platform of the LTT:

1) For the general line of the resolution "The Political Situation in West Germany and the Tasks of the GIM,"

2) For the general line of the resolution "The Key Questions of the Portuguese Revolution" (Rundbrief No. 24, Jan. 1976)

3) For a reversal of the Latin American guerrilla orientation of the 1969 world congress and its programmatic and geographic extension, which was accentuated at the fourth congress since reunification (tenth world congress).

4) For the reaffirmation of the fundamental program, traditions and practice of the Fourth International as it stood at the time of the third world congress since reunification (9th world congress), especially the commitment to the Leninist strategy of building combat parties. The more revolutionary the situation, the more decisive will be the role of such a party.

5) For all measures that make it possible to come to a genuine political clarification in the GIM: prompt publication of all bulletins, pre-conference periods that guarantee a real discussion, encouragement of the discussion by the national leadership.

6) For the intensive participation of the GIM in the international discussion and preparation of the fifth congress since reunification (eleventh world congress). This means above all translation and publication of all international bulletins that appear.

How to Join the LTT

Everyone who declares his or her support for the tendency platform and accordingly informs the national leadership becomes a member of the LTT. In accordance with the tradition of our movement there is no tendency discipline, neither on political nor on organizational questions.

Frankfurt am Main,
December 28, 1975

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To: The Political Office, the Central Committee and the National Committee of the GCR, Italian Section of the Fourth International

--The last political resolution of the Central Committee of the GCR, formulated the 7-8 of February and appearing in the last issue of Bandiera Rossa, represented another step down the road followed by our national leadership up until now, a road characterized by an ever more profound detachment from reality, one upon which it will be impossible to build a Trotskyist organization in Italy.

The principal feature of the resolution is that all its evaluations are based on what happens in restricted political circles or on episodes limited to tiny minorities. It displays an absolute incapacity to comprehend the consciousness of the broad masses and therefore to provide a clear political perspective. The influence of reformism, today at its highest point in Italy, is portrayed as being in complete crisis. The inability of the mass movement to find a political instrument which fully expresses it (which is the concrete way the crisis of leadership of the proletariat manifests itself today) is completely underestimated and the illusion about "outflanking" substituted for it.

The question of the government, which is central today because of the disintegration of the Christian Democrats' monopoly of power, is posed in incredibly abstract terms. In fact, this question is postponed until some future situation of dual power, thus disarming us against the class collaborationist line of the workers parties and the ambiguities of the centrists.

Not dealing with the question of a workers' government, which should be the central political axis of our programmatic proposals, leaves us with a sham of a program which, detached from the political problem of power, loses any transitional character and becomes economism and maximal ultimatism.

Only such a maneuver could enable us to present the agreement on 35 hours, on 50,000 lire, and on the nationalization of industries that close, as a credible programmatic base for an electoral bloc with the centrist groups, and in particular with Lotta Continua.

--The recent crisis in the organization (which is anything but finished), with the loss of around half the membership during the course of the last year and the last two months, hasn't even provoked some positive rethinking among the leadership of the GCR. On the contrary it seems to have convinced a section that is increasingly in control of our organization of the necessity of playing all its cards in the work of "coordination", up to and including the notion of the "grand electoral ticket" in which our organization assumes the role of critical conscience for Lotta Continua.

Naples/2

The infrequent examples of mass work which sections of the organization do carry out --for example, among women and among teachers -- are not reflected in the slightest way in the resolution. This raises once again the contradiction between the perspective of the GCR's leadership and that of those activists who are left in the organization. Whether it be said or written explicitly or not, it appears more and more clear to all that the strategy for building a revolutionary party in the heads of our leaders has very little or nothing at all to do with our mass work in newly radicalized sectors, but rather leads through a strategy of agreement with and the evolution of left sectors of centrist groups. All the political underpinnings of the resolution point in this direction.

--In these circumstances, it would be irresponsible for those of us who consider this much more than a passing tactical error to wait any longer to constitute a tendency. A clear political contraposition of method and proposals is necessary.

The existence of crystallized opposing positions for long periods certainly does not favor the construction of a political organization. What's more, this absorbs a great deal of energy that could be differently and gainfully utilized in a homogeneous organization. Nevertheless, it is necessary for us to constitute a tendency without delay, above all because we may be approaching a development as important as an election campaign. For this reason we are deciding today to reject the suggestion of the last national conference not to form national tendencies until the next pre-convention discussion. Instead we have decided to make use of our statutory right to form a tendency at any time.

In addition to the methodological differences already pointed out by the signers of this letter during the last pre-convention discussion, we think it is proper to begin defining our positions in a positive way, with a counter political resolution to that of the Central Committee on the current situation and our tasks. On the basis of such a resolution we are forming a tendency, naturally inviting all those who agree on its contents to join it.

--It is undoubtedly true that the organization of the GCR suffers from the scantiness of its forces. But we cannot at all tolerate the Italian section being kept in the dark about the international discussion, or only being informed through second-hand accounts, inevitably distorted. We maintain that unless the international discussion takes place in a real and concrete way in our section, our adherence to the Fourth International risks being reduced to a mere question for the top leadership.

Naples/3

The section knows nothing about the world resolution of the minority at the last world congress; it knows nothing of some of the contributions of the minority on Latin America. It knows nothing whatsoever about the extremely important discussion on the question of defense of bourgeois democratic rights and institutions in Argentina. It has not had any first hand information on the positions of the LTF and then of the PST on Portugal. It is ignorant of the terms of the debate on Angola.

All this is not so much a result of the desire to hide the positions of the international minority in favor of those of the IMT as it is a result of internal political and organizational choices: the attempt to throw all of the organization's forces in a certain direction, at the cost of neglecting the most elementary norms of democratic centralism, the encouragement of discussion and political growth among comrades. Some good contributions by comrades of the majority tendency have also paid the price for this progressive political impoverishment of the discussion in the GCR. Besides this, unfortunately, a quantity of contributions by comrades of the GCR which they requested be published in internal bulletins have remained in the desk drawers of the Political Office.

We contend, therefore, that we are not committing any violation of democratic centralism in deciding to take directly upon ourselves the task of mimeographing and distributing the material of the tendencies, and those contributions to the international discussion which-- within the limits of our resources-- we can succeed in translating. Awaiting your reply, we agree to work out all the technical details with you.

Naples, March 1, 1976

Lucio (Naples)
Sebastiano (Naples)
Titti (Naples)

REPORT ON DANISH CONFERENCE

by Johnson

In February a national convention of the Revolutionary Socialist League, Danish section of the Fourth International, was held. In the course of the preparations of the convention, four tendencies were formed--Iskra, Trotskyist Tendency, Tendency 2, and the New Course Tendency.

The Iskra tendency was composed of supporters of the Danish Kompass tendency and members of the LTF. In preparing for the convention, the comrades of the two tendencies found that they agreed on most questions under discussion for the convention and began preparing some resolutions together. This included a balance sheet on the work of the section since the last convention, university work, trade union work, women's liberation, and the question of democratic rights. On the basis of this agreement the comrades felt it was correct to have a common tendency. There also tended to be some convergence of views of some international questions although this was not included in the platform of the new tendency. For example, some of the leaders of the Kompass tendency reported to me that they considered the general line of the August LTF resolution on Portugal correct.

The leadership of the Trotskyist tendency had been the majority of the national leadership from the last congress. The leadership of the New Course had been the central Copenhagen leadership. In the course of the pre-congress period, disagreements developed between them and two tendencies were created. They had been supporters of a common resolution at the previous convention. The main leaders of Tendency 2 had led a similar small tendency at the previous convention. At that convention the leaders of all three of these tendencies had considered themselves supporters of the IMT. Some of the leaders of the New Course tendency now say they disagree with the European resolution and do not consider themselves members of the IMT.

The convention had been postponed several times in an attempt to let the discussion develop and make sure that there was discussion in all the branches. Most of the discussion both prior to and at the convention, was an attempt to assess the work of the section and come to grips with what most members considered were errors.

In his report to the convention, the reporter for the Trotskyist tendency said that in his opinion the cause of the errors lay in the decisions of the previous convention, especially in an underestimation of the influence of the Socialist Party as the leadership of the working class.

This led to errors in finding a way to talk to working people. It began with a failure to work out a political alternative on the governmental level. The section failed to raise political demands on the social democratic government.

He also felt that demanding action committees during the May 1974 strikes was an error. This was asking the working class to leave the unions and create new organizations. In his opinion this amounted to asking for the creation of dual power and was adventurist. He felt that the orientation of the work in the factories had been outside the unions. He also gave the example of Chile work, where he felt the aim of the work had been general political propaganda geared solely toward recruitment and not of building a Chile defense movement.

The Iskra tendency and the New Course tendency made similar criticisms. The Iskra reporter pointed to the European resolution as the source of the errors. The other tendencies did not agree with this assessment.

The Iskra tendency received the support of 43 per cent of the delegates, the New Course 25 per cent, the Trotskyist tendency 20 per cent, and the Tendency 2 11 per cent. The convention decided to elect a central committee with an Iskra majority and the incoming political bureau including a member of each of the other tendencies.

The Iskra tendency explained to the convention that when it had been formed as a tendency the initiators of it did not believe that they would be a majority. They also had not previously been direct participants in the central leadership. (They were on the central committee but not the political bureau or the editorial board of the paper.) Therefore most of their documents had been a criticism of the current political line being presented by the leadership, and they had not been able to develop a well worked out resolution on what the section should do. They could only outline a general method to approach political activity. The concrete activities would have to be worked out collectively in the incoming leadership. But they recognized that the results of the convention place the responsibility on them to attempt to lead the organization, and they would accept this responsibility.

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Lima

April 29, 1976

Cde. Mary-Alice Waters

The news we have from Argentina is that nothing serious has happened to them, although, of course, they are in a much more difficult situation than before.

With regard to the draft resolution prepared by the leadership of the Argentine PST, in the name of the leadership of the Peruvian PST I am informing you that our organization has not completed its discussion on Portugal and that up to now there has been no proposal to leave the ITF.

Greetings.

s/Hugo

LETTER TO JOSEPH HANSEN FROM ERNEST MANDEI

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 IIDBs 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 change 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 laid 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

LETTER TO ERNEST MANDEL FROM JOSEPH HANSEN

New York, N. Y.
May 17, 1976

press "to read both sides of the story, and judge by themselves."

Dear Ernest,

In reply to your letter of April 17:

1. I do not understand why you consider it "bizarre" to address a letter to the Bureau of the International Majority Tendency on a matter such as the article submitted by Comrade Hernández. My impression was that the IMT had intervened rather strongly in the Mexican situation, in which Comrade Hernández's article is an important element, and that the IMT would be interested in achieving maximum collaboration from all sides in the effort to assure a positive outcome there.

To me it seems bizarre to reject preliminary consultation before referring the matter to the United Secretariat or the International Executive Committee. However, that is up to you to decide, and you have acted accordingly, turning the matter over to the United Secretariat for further disposition.

2. Your assertion that I initiated the public debate over the split in the Liga Socialista is unacceptable. Comrade Hernández injected the debate into the public realm beginning at the Second Congress of the Liga Socialista.

Subsequently, he has publicly exacerbated the "police agent" and "robbery" questions instead of attempting to defuse them for the sake of facilitating a principled unification of the groups in Mexico.

3. You say that Comrade Hernández strongly disagrees with my version of these matters. "He finds it 'libellous' as you find this one." I cannot speak for Comrade Hernández on the matter; I do not have close enough ties with him to vouch for his thoughts.

When I said in my letter of March 17 that the article included material "libellous on the face of it," I meant exactly that. I was not referring to the scurrilous nature of the article as a whole but to the references to individuals outside of the Trotskyist movement that are made in such a way and in such a context as to be indefensible in court. A libel suit can be costly. I would remind you that several decades ago Healy lost his press because of an adverse decision in a libel suit. We have followed the rule from the very beginning of never taking a chance on such material. I am astonished that you do not even appear to know what is involved.

4. You say that everything boils down to the simple question of enabling the readers of our international

That is a correct statement of the principle involved. And that is what was agreed to in the sessions of the Mexican commission and approved by the IEC,

However in your defense of the actual article submitted by Comrade Hernández you seem to have forgotten that the nature of the article was specified in the agreement that outlined the conditions for a principled unification of the Mexican groups. The article was not to raise new issues requiring a fresh answer. In addition I think everyone took it for granted that the article would be written in accordance with the spirit and terms of the unification agreement and not in violation of them. As I said in my letter of March 17 I would certainly welcome an article replying to the political criticisms made of Comrade Hernández's course "despite any differences I might still hold with his interpretations."

Thus the present dispute does not involve the general principle, as you make out, but the specific article. The specific article was not presented to the IEC, still less unanimously approved by the IEC as you seem to imply.

If the article had been presented to the IEC I can assure you that there would have been the most strenuous objection to publishing it. Moreover, debate would have been opened then and there as to the true meaning of the proposed agreement on unification of the Mexican groups.

5. You state that your "urgent demand" that Comrade Hernández's article be published in IP, "does not imply that that article could not be revised for publication. Since you consider it "bizarre" for the Bureau of the IMT to deal with this question, and have disavowed any concern of the IMT leadership in the matter, I do not know in what capacity you are acting. Have you been empowered by Comrade Hernández to speak for him in this question? Or are you volunteering in a personal capacity to serve as arbiter?

6. You say, referring to me, that the agreement reached at the IEC "was that, while you were in Europe, we should discuss together the first draft of comrade Hernández..."

Nothing of the kind! I raised the question of who should be encharged with editing the article. I said that while I was prepared to do it, my decisions could well be misunderstood and taken as factionally motivated; consequently it was better that I remove myself from

any responsibility for the task. I suggested that it should be left up to the contributing editors. Since George Novack was not present, he could go over the draft later.

I stayed as long as possible in Brussels so as to save time in getting the article, but I had to leave before it was completed.

Consequently, the responsibility for the edited version of Comrade Hernández's article lies wholly with you.

7. You say that although my stay in Europe "provided ample time" for mutual consultation on the edited draft, "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."

I must admit that your crystal ball has given you -- after the event, naturally -- an accurate picture of what I really had in mind. My proposal that you should edit Comrade Hernández's article was a devious trap, since I correctly foresaw both the nature of the article and the fact that you would prove to be so incompetent in editing it as to make it impossible to publish the article, full stop.

8. You end your letter by saying that anyone "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." I agree with what you say -- whoever might demand that past events should be "forgotten" would certainly stand in the way of a principled unification. But who is making such a preposterous demand?

On the other hand, what shall we say of someone who insists on publicizing the past differences and enlarging on them after signing a public statement that indicates they have been superseded? And what shall we say of the selection of issues that are not political but of the most poisonous organizational nature?

In this connection, I call your attention to the fact that Comrade Hernández has published his article in El Socialista. Evidently he differs with you on priorities. Continuation of public mud-slinging comes first in the agenda of El Socialista as part of the "Trotskyist" cover Comrade Hernández is providing for the Mexican Stalinists in their electoral campaign.

9. In my letter of March 17 I said that we would appreciate receiving a copy of the tapes from which Comrade Hernández quoted and which you must have checked for accuracy when you edited the article.

You say nothing about this request in your reply of April 17. I hope that this is simply an oversight. In any case I would appreciate receiving a copy of the tapes without further delay.

10. In view of the controversy over the advisability of publishing Comrade Hernández's article, I would also appreciate receiving a copy of the manuscript he submitted to you. I would like to see what editorial changes you made in the original draft.

Comradely yours,
Joe

cc: United Secretariat

P. S. I will write separately about the second article submitted by Comrade Hernández.