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AUGUST

1938

ON THE REVOLUTIONARY CALENDAR

Dear Friend:

In your letter of May 5th you draw my attention to a supposed contradiction in the appreciation of the May Days at Barcelona between the letter of Lund (The Insurrection in Catalonia - A Few Preliminary Remarks) dated May 12, 1937, and my article (The Verification of Ideas and Individuals Through the Experience of the Spanish Revolution) dated August 24, 1937.

This supposed contradiction concerns the analogy with the July days at Petrograd. You predict as well that the pro-POUMists are going to be served by this "contradiction." I do not think so, because this would be truly too imprudent. I have re-read the text of the two articles. I do not find the least contradiction. On the contrary they complete one another.

The Historical Analogy

Each concrete event of history is determined by a multitude of fundamental and secondary factors. The dialectic imparts a decisive importance to factors of the second, the third and the tenth order in a given event. Thus one can say with assurance that the defeat of the German working class was determined not by the very low level of productive forces, not by the insufficient development of class antagonisms, but directly and even exclusively by the bankruptcy of the working class party. Thus we know that the party occupies in the hierarchy of historic factors the nth place.

In the July days in Russia, if one analyzes them thoroughly, he finds from top to bottom all the factors which determined the preceding history of the country: the level of production, the specific weight of the working class, the role of the peasants, the place of Petrograd in the national life, the role of the different parties - without speaking of the influence of the war and the enormous weight of the army. It is then absolutely evident that the July days could never be repeated anywhere. Of what use, then, is the analogy? Solely to clarify a new event from a point of view that we are the most interested in practically for the present. In this way I have often invoked the July days as an example of a grave defeat which was, however, not decisive and which may also be considered as an inevitable stage on the road to victory. It must be added, however, that this victory was by no means "assured" by the defeat, but that it was solely possible under certain supplementary conditions, including a correct revolutionary policy.

"What It Is Necessary to Underline"

Lund's article, written May 12, 1937, on the basis of cabled information "not only incomplete, but in addition deliberately distorted," says: "The analogy with the events of July 1917 is too evident for it to be insisted upon. What it is necessary to underline are above all the differences." The author is then far from being content with the analogy. On the contrary, he warns the reader of its insufficiency for

analysis and prognosis. "What it is necessary to underline," he says, "are above all the differences." The analogy with the July days was made under conditions which above all are from the point of view of immediate propaganda. The uppermost purpose was to encourage the vanquished. "The Russians also suffered their defeat in July, and yet they were able to seize power." That is what the analogy is reduced to in this case.

That is why Lund, who did not directly address the masses, but the leaders, said essentially in his letter: "You naturally use the example of the Russian July to encourage the workers. This so natural that it is not necessary to insist upon it. But don't forget that independently from this very general analogy which has its importance for immediate propaganda the situations are absolutely different and that our analysis and our prognosis must be based not so much on the common traits as upon the differences." Lund characterizes the movement of May as "spontaneous, that is to say, as having burst out unexpectedly for the leaders, including those of the P. O. U. M." (again a certain analogy with the July days in Russia.) But in the same letter Lund calls the movement of May by its right name: an insurrection. He is far from regarding this insurrection as "premature." He is disquieted by the news of an "armistice" in Barcelona, whereas in Petrograd in July, 1917, the Bolsheviks themselves sought the armistice.

Here is what Lund says on this question: "what does the armistice in Barcelona of which the telegrams speak signify: the defeat of the insurgents determined primarily by the inconsistency of the leadership or the direct capitulation of the leaders frightened by the drive of the masses? We are not yet aware of it. For the time being the struggle seems to continue outside of Barcelona. Is a resumption of the offensive in Barcelona possible?" In sum the question for Lund is that of an insurrectional movement which, whatever its point of departure, is directed by the entire objective situation, by the entire preceding history of the revolution towards the conquest of power. The sole question in this situation was that of the attitude of the organizations of the left, the P. O. U. M. and the Anarchists. Such was the "preliminary" appreciation of Lund, given at the same time as the events.

My article of August 23rd was directed primarily against Comrade Ver. What constituted his fault, or rather one of his faults which are very numerous? He has based his appreciation of the May Days upon the purely formal analogy with the July days. In place of studying the situation, such as it was presented in the month of May, 1937, after more than six years of revolutionary development, Ver finds in the schematic calendar a master-key for opening all the enigmas of history and of politics. In other words, Ver commits precisely the fault against which Lund has attempted to place us on guard when he wrote: "What it is necessary to underline are above all the differences."

The Capture of Power Was Possible in May

At a distance of some thousands of miles, without having the information which one could find solely at the place of action, a person was still able to ask in the month of May whether the conquest of power was not materially possible. But since then documents, reports, innumerable articles have appeared in the press of all the tendencies. All the

facts, all the data, all the testimony leads to the same conclusion: the conquest of power was possible, was assured, as much as the issue of the struggle can be in general assured in advance. The most important evidence comes from the Anarchists. Since the May insurrection Solidaridad Obrera has not ceased to repeat the same plaintive melody: "We are accused of having been the instigators of the May rebellion. But we were completely opposed to it. The proof? Our adversaries know it as well as we: if we had wished to take power, we could have accomplished it in May with certainty. But we are against dictatorship, etc., etc."

The misfortune is precisely that the C. N. T. did not want power. The misfortune is that the leadership of the P. O. U. M. was passively adapting itself to the leadership of the C. N. T. The misfortune (of a most modest size) is that Ver, Sneevliet and Victor Serge are passively adapting themselves to the attitude of the P. O. U. M. Worse yet, at the decisive moment when we attempted to shake the fatal self-sufficiency of the P. O. U. M. ("their own" building, "their own" radio station, "their own" printing press, "their own" militia) when we attempted to make comprehensible to the leaders of the P. O. U. M. that the revolution has its pitiless logic, which does not tolerate half-measures (that is, moreover, precisely why the Stalinists have superseded the Socialists and the Anarchists), it is at this critical moment that the Vers, the Sneevliets, the Victor Serges have placed their cudgels between the spokes.

They have found it well to support the leadership of the P. O. U. M. against us, that is to support their hesitations, their inconsistencies, their opportunism. The last events have brought their pitiless verification. Since the so-called "July Days," the P. O. U. M., far from being strengthened, has been virtually crushed. The C. N. T., of which the P. O. U. M. was a shadow, is now losing its positions one after the other. We do not know if the Spanish revolution can yet be saved by a new eruption from below. But the C. N. T. and the P. O. U. M. have done just about everything to assure the victory of the Stalinists, that is of the counter-revolution. And Ver, Sneevliet, Victor Serge have done everything to support the P. O. U. M. on that road to ruin.

The Decisive Question

All our sections have followed with the greatest attention the development of the situation in Spain. If one goes over our international press now, and all the internal bulletins, he can state with satisfaction that the great majority of the organization have known how to apply the Leninist method to Spanish events. We have had correspondence of indisputable Marxist value from Clart, from Moulin, from Braun. Our organization has in this way passed its theoretic test in a question of historic breadth. And at each stage Comrades Sneevliet and Ver, with the aid of Victor Serge, have opposed to our position, that of the crushing majority of the Fourth International, a centrist attitude which was as sharply against the I. S. as it was unclear in its perspectives and in its slogans.

When Comrade Sneevliet broke off every normal relation with the International organization, when he collaborated with our implacable adversaries against us, he constantly used as a pretext, the "bad regime," "the incompetence" of the I. S., etc. Comrade Ver did the same thing

with a few individual variations which are characteristic of him. On the question of the "regime," we shall also have several words to say to our comrade Sneevliet in order to demonstrate the bureaucratism which stifled the life of the party and that the good will of the chief who liked neither program, nor theses, nor discussion cannot be a rule in the world party of the social revolution. But today it is not a question of the "regime." The question is one of attitude toward the Spanish revolution. The fundamental divergences are revealed. The policy of the P. O. U. W. was and remains (as much as it remains at all) the policy of Menshevism. The Fourth International continues and develops the Bolshevik tradition.

Our Methods

The Fourth International is no more than at its beginning. It has a stupendous task of education to accomplish. It is necessary to be patient. If one casts a glance back on our history during the last ten years, he cannot reproach us for lacking in patience and endurance. Expulsions have been extremely rare. One can count them on his fingers. Our organization has always employed the methods of discussion, of persuasion, leaving to time and to events the verification of the conflicting points of view. The number of splits and resignations were the product of elements and groups who, despite our best will and pedagogical patience, have themselves acknowledged the incompatibility of their "tendency" with the Bolshevik organization. Those who have separated themselves from us, alleging the "bad regime" of the Fourth International, have fallen one after the other into nothing. Every one of these, Landau, Vitte, R. Molinier, Oehler, Weisbord, Field, and others have had to verify by their own lamentable experience that it is not so easy to improvise a tendency outside of the line historically determined by developments during a dozen years, a great historic tradition, and the uninterrupted collective work of marxist thought.

Comrade Sneevliet thought long ago of severing his party from the International organization. Oh, certainly he has always employed the figure "four" to designate his position. But outside of the fundamental principles, that is of the Bolshevik-Leninist program, outside of our collective work on that basis, the formula of the Fourth International becomes a hollow phrase, good for nothing. This situation, more and more equivocal, has already lasted for almost three years. That is a little too long for a "revolutionary calendar." It is not necessary to say that we do not want the separation of our Dutch section. All to the contrary. What we do want is that it enter effectively into our international framework, that it really participate in our collective life. No international organization can tolerate one of its sections remaining separated by a water-tight partition and hearing "accusations" of greater and greater sharpness, of greater and greater unjustifiability from Comrade Sneevliet against our "regime," against our "manners," for the sake of hiding in this way his fundamental differences with the Bolshevik-Leninists. And naturally Ver never misses an occasion to support a twisted policy, be it to the right or to the left - a trifling matter.

What we must have with our sister party in Holland is a thorough discussion. This is the only possibility of preventing a split in the dark, bureaucratically prepared and bureaucratically realized. Our Belgian

section will naturally participate in this discussion which should form the preparation for the next international Conference. We shall know how to avoid the split. We shall at the same time know to stop those who are preparing the split. We shall come out of the discussion more matured and more united. Great events are approaching. We haven't the right to repeat the same mistakes two or three times. The Spanish revolution, whatever its importance, is not more than a "rehearsal" for events many times grander. It is necessary to draw all the lessons from this experience lived by the new generation. This cannot be done through ~~casual~~ interpretations of such and such a quotation with which somebody will be able to divert us from our road. Events have spoken. The International Conference will know how to interpret their voice.

Crux

October 28, 1937

LETTER of TROISKY, DEC. 2, 1937

December 2, 1937

Dear Comrade Snœvliet:

I didn't answer your very belated last letter concerning Reiss directly because we are separated not only by this tragic individual question but by all other important political issues, I could say by the whole conception of revolutionary activity and political solidarity.

This totally unhealthy situation has lasted years, as many years as your group has adhered to our international organization. Many younger comrades better acquainted with the political line and the organizational methods of the Dutch section have insisted, beginning with 1934, upon the necessity of openly clarifying our profound theoretical, political, and practical differences. Through letters and conversations I opposed these proposals. Not that I was in agreement with your political line, -- never -- but I feared that a premature opening of a general discussion without a preparatory period of common experience could only provoke an irreparable split. I was guided by the idea that your organization has a very different pre-history and a different education from all the others. That is why I recommended with insistence to our comrades to give your organization more time for a re-orientation, a re-education. Naturally we were hoping not only to "teach" our Dutch comrades but also to learn from them.

I must say that the hopes I placed in this cautious and patient method proved to be false. The Dutch party, or, better to say, its leaders, intervened in our international life and in the life of every section with vigor and sometimes with extreme brutality. Such was their attitude at the entering of our French section, then the Belgian, and later the American section into the respective Socialist parties. Such was their attitude toward the German comrades. The Dutch party, or better to say, its leaders never hesitated at supporting a small minority in a foreign section against the majority. It never hesitated at openly opposing the most important decisions of the whole International organization and acting independently as in the case of Spain. At the same time you considered the Dutch party as taboo to all the other sections. Every critical word concerning your general, or more specifically your trade union policy, was considered a crime. With other work you asked a totally exceptional position for the Dutch section.

When I wrote a letter to our International Conference in which I expressed some critical considerations upon your political line, you used this letter as a pretext for not participating in the Conference. You declared later that you don't recognize the formally elected International Secretariat. In all questions you act absolutely independently from the International organization. In the Reiss question you acted without the knowledge and participation of the Russian comrades and I believe that this absolutely incomprehensible attitude contributed to the tragic issue. I write you this with full frankness because I consider this letter as personal. I am making my last attempt to save your connection with the Fourth International and at the same time the future of the Dutch party.

You must finally understand that nobody in our International movement is inclined to further tolerate the absolutely abnormal situation under which the Dutch party covers itself with the banner of the Fourth International and conducts a policy which is flagrantly contradictory to all our

principles and decisions.

The NAS has definitely become a stone on the neck of the party and this stone will drag you to the bottom. A party which doesn't participate in the real mass unions is not a revolutionary party. The NAS exists only thanks to the toleration and financial support of the bourgeois government. This financial support is dependent upon your political attitude. That is the genuine reason why the party didn't, in spite of all our insistence, elaborate a political platform. That is also the reason why you as parliamentary deputy never gave a genuine revolutionary speech which could serve for propaganda in Holland as well as abroad. Your activity has a diplomatic and not a very revolutionary character. You are bound through your NAS position by the hands and by the feet. And the NAS itself is not a bridge to the masses but a wall separating you from the masses.

When we criticize false trade union politics in other countries, people answer: "And your Dutch organization?" When we criticize the Menshevik and totally fatal policy of the P.O.U.M. leadership, you intervene in order to give them support against us and you do it under the banner of the Fourth International. Do you believe that any serious revolutionary organization can tolerate indefinitely such a situation? We are very patient, but we cannot sacrifice the elementary interests of our movement.

I personally am ready to do everything in order to help to re-integrate the Dutch party into the ranks of the Fourth International. From Cannon's letter I know that he has the same disposition. I doubt that anyone on our side wishes or even accepts the idea of a split. But at the same time we will free ourselves from equivocation. In any case I say in my own name, openly: If you don't accept common rules for collaboration and active solidarity; if you renounce participating normally like every other section in the International Conference; if you will continue with the totally ambiguous attitude: in words with the Fourth International, in deeds against it, then it is better to undergo an open and honest split. You will then remain with the NAS and we with the Fourth International. We will create a section in Holland and we will try to realize through an open fight what we were unable to realize through patient collaboration and comradely discussion.

I hesitated for a long time before writing you this letter because, permit me to say it, I know your impulsiveness and your readiness to take the most important decisions under the influence of personal impulsions. It is possible also that this letter will provoke in you a reaction contrary to the intention with which it is written. It is possible that you will use this frank warning in order to accelerate the split. But I have no other choice. The denouement, especially after the Spanish experience and the Reiss incident, cannot any longer be postponed. The hour of the last decision is at hand. The future of our relations depends entirely upon your attitude to the coming conference. That is why I make this final appeal to your sense of revolutionary responsibility. The day when I receive a cable or a letter from you announcing that your party will participate in the conference on the same grounds as every other section will be a very good day not only for me but for the Fourth International and especially for the Dutch party. If you decide otherwise each of us will know what to do.

With best comradely greetings,

L. Trotsky

OPEN LETTER TO NIEUWE FAKKEL

To the Editors of DE NIEUWE FAKKEL and DE INTERNATIONALE:

(Copy: to all sections of the Fourth International
with request to publish it.)

Dear Comrades:

You have more than once given me the honor of publishing my articles. I do not doubt, therefore, that you will not refuse to publish the following brief letter.

From the very beginning of the existence of your party I have disagreed with its leaders and, first of all, with comrade Sneevliet upon all basic questions. Actually the leadership of the R.S.A.P. has always been in irreconcilable opposition with all the other sections of the Fourth International and during the last two years the differences have become increasingly aggravated.

In full agreement with the overwhelming majority of our international organization I have considered and still consider the politics of Sneevliet to be ruinous in the sphere of the trade-union movement.

I have considered and still consider the R.S.A.P.'s lack of a revolutionary program of action and the resultant unprincipled character of agitation to be completely impermissible.

I have considered and still consider that the attitude of the leadership of the R.S.A.P. toward the politics of the "People's Front" has at all times remained equivocal, i.e., covertly and at times openly opportunistic.

The policy of comrade Sneevliet on the question of the P.O.U.M is in full contradiction with the alphabet of the class struggle and has caused an indubitable injury to the Spanish revolution and the Fourth International.

The policy of comrade Sneevliet on the Russian question was and still is false in essence and disloyal in attitude toward the Russian Bolshevik-Leninists. I have considered and still consider the parliamentary activity of Com. Sneevliet to be opportunistic.

I have considered and still consider the completely uncomradely attitude of the leadership of the R.S.A.P. toward all other sections and to the International Secretariat to be impermissible.

I have considered and still consider that the political correctness in all basic conflicts between comrade Sneevliet and the International Secretariat has been on the side of the I.S.

Dozens of times the International Secretariat has proposed to your Central Committee to open a frank discussion upon all disputed questions. You have stubbornly refused to fulfill this elementary duty in relation to your own party. Instead of opening a discussion your Central Committee resorted to the expulsion of genuine partis-

sens of the Fourth International from your organization. This measure could signify nothing less than the preparation for a split with the Fourth International and a shift into the camp of the "left" Social Democrats united around the London Bureau.

My last letter to comrade Sneevliet, dated December 2, 1937, in which I asked whether your party intended to participate in the International Conference, has been unanswered. More important is the fact that the official inquiry of the International Secretariat has also remained unanswered.

The present letter, summing up the five year attempt at collaboration, comradely criticism, mutual clarification and rapprochement, has as its aim to say frankly what is. Each one has to bear responsibility for his political line. The members of your party and of all the sections of the Fourth International will judge.

With revolutionary greetings,

Coyoacan, D. F., Jan. 21, 1938

LEON TROTSKY

The NIEUWE FAKKEL, weekly organ of the R.S.A.P. published this open letter in its issue of Feb. 18, 1938, with the following commentary:

THE ANTHEMA OF COYOACAN

What happened had to happen. The above document would indeed appear to be a solemn anathema. Here we are expelled from the fraternal brotherhood of the I.S. for the Fourth International whose infallible head is comrade Trotsky. We do not know if a council of the popes of this fraternal brotherhood was held, before the heretic was judged and condemned. These people pay little attention to such formalities.

Since July 1936, there have been marked indications that this could be the only outcome. It was then that the leadership of the R.S.A.P. left a conference which, following instructions received from Oslo, was forced to fail in its real purpose, which nevertheless did not prevent this conference from being considered the founding conference for the Fourth International. This interpretation is unconditionally recognized by the "international organization" of Trotsky. Outside of this international organization, no mortal can perceive that the Fourth International exists except as an idea which must be born and developed, because the Second and Third Internationals have become ineffectual guides for the world proletariat in its forward march to socialism.

L.D.T. speaks of the period of five years of contact in the course of which he has not succeeded in making Sneevliet and those who think like him "authentic partisans of the Fourth International" as he conceives it. In fact, before the month of December, 1932, there was no direct contact between the Dutch R.Sp. and the

group around Trotsky. There was agreement on many positions. This could suffice for the making of contacts. The role of Trotsky in the proletarian movement and in the Russian revolution, his words and his deeds, exercised sufficient attractive force to awaken the desire for contacts. At that moment, Trotsky and his followers were still occupied with curing the Third International. We in Holland had some years before already broken definitively with the Third International.

After we reached, in the middle of 1933, an agreement on the writing of a constitution for new revolutionary parties and a new International, there resulted, from the personal contacts between Trotsky and Sneevliet in Copenhagen, the linking of the R.S.P. with the Trotskyist formation. From this time on, we sought for possible ways of carrying out by common agreement preparatory work for the Fourth International. The normal organizational contacts with Trotsky's center lasted only until the foundation of the RSAP in 1935. After this fusion, our party had abnormal relations with the Trotskyist center and the London Bureau. In the course of the first year of existence of the R.S.A.P. a severe ideological struggle contributed to making the political positions of the unified party more in accord with those of the Trotskyist center than with those of the London Bureau. The very abnormal conceptions which it became evident existed in the Trotskyist center on the subject of an International center and its tasks, the equally abnormal organizational attitudes in this center, the "sharp turns" in the domain of tactic, the policies and the organization of this Trotskyist center and its subdivisions, brought to a head a situation which led the R.S.A.P. delegation to withdraw from the International conference and consider the R.S.A.P. no longer bound by the results of this conference.

We shall not now examine the points we have numbered in the indictment and which form the essential part of the anathema. For several weeks now a commission set up by the leadership of the party has been busy preparing the party's position on the question of international relations. Some of these points--Nos. 2,3,5,6,7 - provoke nothing but questions. We are not in a position to pass judgment until we have solid and convincing documentation showing the correctness of the accusations thus formulated. In point 1, it is a question of a real divergence of opinion; the same for point 4. We also, in regard to the Spanish civil war, have seen that damage has been done to the Fourth International - but by the I.S. and, to name him, by Trotsky.

Not a hair in our head dreams of denying the great number of Trotsky's qualities as a revolutionary fighter. It is precisely because we attribute such great importance to these qualities that we have always - for several years now - published Trotsky's articles for the Dutch workers. We hope to take the liberty of doing this again in the future. But this appreciation does not at all affect what experience has taught us, namely, that it is absolutely wrong to declare that the Fourth International can be constituted by this "Only Way", whose leadership is known only to L.D.T. and is determined by him. We and other organizations throughout the world, which recognize the necessity for the Fourth International, will determine in common in the framework of our own movement the work which must be done for the Fourth International. There is

finally one sentence of Trotsky's anathema with which we are in complete agreement: "Everyone must shoulder the responsibility for his political line." We assume the responsibility when we accept the necessary separation of our roads, since we cannot see without apprehension a real worker's party exposed to the "political education" of the Trotskyist center.

February 15, 1938

H. Sneevliet

NOTE

We deeply regret not being able to publish, for lack of space, the entire series of polemical articles of the "Nieuwe Fakkel" against the I.S., against the Dutch Bolshevik-Leninists expelled from the R.S.A.P., against comrade Trotsky, the French party, etc. ..., articles which abound in coarseness, calumnies and inaccuracies, and excel in lacking all serious political argument. The titles alone give a sufficient idea of their nature: "Muckraking with the I. S.", "Defend your party with energy", "Be prepared against the enemies of the party". There is in addition an article on the International Conference and on that of the London Bureau; then a heading - "For the Fourth International."

EDITORIAL OF "DE ENIGE WEG"

This is the reply of "De Enige Weg" (The Only Way), organ of the Bolshevik-Leninists, March 2, 1938, to the above article by Sneevliet:

The R.S.A.P. and the open letter of Trotsky.

The "Nieuwe Fakkel" published on February 18th, Trotsky's open letter to the leadership of the R.S.A.P., followed by an article in which it was considered to be a solemn anathema. By this letter Trotsky broke openly with the policy of the leadership of the R.S.A.P. Sneevliet now presents things as if the fraternal brotherhood of Trotskyists had expelled the heretic, and actually even demands to know if a council of popes had been held, while completely passing over in silence the fact that Trotsky, in his letter of December 2, 1937, had expressly asked whether the leadership of the party desired to participate in the next international conference of the international organization for the Fourth International. The letter has remained without answer. Notwithstanding the fact that at the conference of July 3-4, 1936 for the Fourth International, the R.S.A.P. had broken with the I.S., an attempt has been made to get the R.S.A.P. to participate at the conference.

The R.S.A.P. could have participated in the conference and there would then have been no open letter. But the leadership of the Party knew perfectly well that this conference would have made a thorough analysis of the Party's policy. That is why it is easier not to answer and to cover up afterwards, with idle chatter about the conference.

For the nth time Sneevliet exposes the genesis of the relations of the R.S.A.P. with Trotsky and the Trotskyist center and he again presents things as if the differences which led to the break were organizational questions. That permits him to remain vague about the deep political differences.

Here is a sentence from the 3rd paragraph: "The role of Trotsky in the proletarian movement and in the Russian Revolution, his words and his deeds, exercised sufficient attractive force to awaken the desire for contact." This is very significant. It clearly emerges that the attempts to establish contacts with Trotsky were not based on the desire to collaborate collectively in the elaboration of a Bolshevik program. It was very good publicity which would give the Dutch party a sufficiently attractive force. "Sufficiently attractive force" - these words alone reveal that only diplomatic and non-revolutionary Marxist considerations were decisive in the establishment of the contact, the consequences of which were not even dreamed.

Sneevliet has not examined the different points of the Open Letter. He limits himself to announcing that a commission has been created which is to prepare positions on the question of international relations. This commission does not have for its goal the establishing of clarity; its aim is to justify the position adopted by the leadership of the Party at the summer conference, although the Party does not have the right to take a position without being informed. This commission has not been constituted to examine the policy of the leadership, but has as its task to produce material destined better to combat the opposition. That is why it will submit to a microscopic examination the "mistakes" of the I.S. and forget to make an analysis of the policy of the Party, just as the Party has always neglected to make an analysis of its own policy. For the moment, the existence of this commission permits Sneevliet to affirm that we cannot yet judge, and to deliver himself of the pleasantry that this Open Letter constitutes an anathema.

In treating point 4, Sneevliet says: "We also, in regard to the Spanish Civil War, have seen that damage has been done to the Fourth International - but by the I.S. and, to name him, by Trotsky. To which Fourth International? Certainly damage has been done to Sneevliet's dream, which envisions the creation of the 4th International under the stroke of great events, following which the 4th International will fall like a miracle from the sky. And the "historic process" will undertake the task of the vanguard, which therefore obtains the right to make a compromise with the Bolshevik program. He has forgotten the first condition, that great events must become "victories". He has forgotten that for this a revolutionary policy is necessary and has believed, as simply as that, that the POUM would bring the victory. He has trampled underfoot the great lesson of Lenin of April 1917, and has supported the policy of the POUM, without analysing it.

The Trotskyist center has made this analysis, and this analysis has been justified. The defeat of the POUM has demolished Sneevliet's dream. This, he cannot admit, because Trotsky is right when he says of Sneevliet: "Sneevliet has understood nothing of the laws of the revolutionary epoch."

RESOLUTION OF THE RSAP ON THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL AND THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE MOVEMENT FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL.

The joint meeting of the Political Bureau and the C.C. and the district leaders, held at Amsterdam on the 12th and 13th of March 1938, after having concluded the work of preparation for the Fourth International:

States that the party has never failed to give first place in its propaganda to the final bankruptcy of the Second and Third Internationals, nor has it ceased showing the workers at the same time, the necessity for grouping themselves on the bases of a new, a Fourth International.

That this position is confirmed by acts such as the signing of the Open Letter of 1935, a document which was tied up with the Declaration of Four in 1933; and that our ideological life has always been penetrated with the conceptions developed in these documents;

Rejects the assertion that the party or a part of its leadership has broken with this orientation and with the principles of revolutionary Marxism;

States that this so-called Center for the Fourth International has pursued a policy tending to discredit the Fourth International even before its birth in the eyes of honest revolutionaries.

a) by having undertaken inadmissible experiments with the sections and organizations formed after much hardship, by dissolving them and having them enter the Second International, and by bringing about, through this policy, a great number of splits and the alienation of certain of the convinced comrades,

b) by having created without serious preparation an organ which represents itself to be not only the leadership of the Fourth International, but also the center which guards all Marxist truth, and claims the right to interfere by force in the life of the different parties;

c) by creating a summit which strangles and suppresses the ideological life of the adherent groups and organizes the representation of these groups at its conferences in such a way as to remove all real value from these conferences;

d) by creating an atmosphere which can only lead to rebellion against the party, to its weakening and to splits, wherever it finds itself in the presence of opposition expressed by responsible declarations of a party;

e) by hurling, where the RSAP is concerned, accusations against the president of the Party, Sneevliet, in the same fashion as was done against well-known Spanish comrades, and against the honor of a revolutionist.* Here the political polemic becomes pure slander, in the Stalinist style. Accusations, which necessarily not only affect the president, but the whole leadership of the party, and the entire party itself. Moreover it is a question of accusations identical in content with those the Stalinists use every day against Trotskyism;

* On the 20th of January, 1938, Trotsky wrote to his Secretary Van: "As to Comrade Ver, who unfortunately is going farther and farther from Marxism, it is characteristic that he finds it possible to support Sneevliet in his utterly opportunist, and henceforth open struggle against the Fourth International, and at the same time to direct against us his ultra-leftist intransigence. In order not to deprive the NAS of governmental manna, Sneevliet has, during peace-time, an attitude altogether conciliatory, diplomatic, and ambiguous towards his government. Can one believe for an instant that in case of a war in which Holland is a participant, Sneevliet will be capable of having a revolutionary attitude? Only a blind man could believe that."

f) by making use of certain methods which bring to mind the ill-famed methods of the Comintern and which therefore can have nothing in common with the collective preparation for the Fourth International.

The meeting declares that such words and actions/ as well as the undermining work undertaken against the party by the International Secretariat for the Fourth International - can only lead to consequences requiring vigorous and energetic intervention;

That conferences with the international Center to which the RSAP may be invited can have no interest if specific conditions are not provided.

In order to collaborate in the preparation for the Fourth International with the I.S. of the Fourth International which it considers one of the forces founding its policy on the necessity for the Fourth International, the meeting makes the following conditions

1) The center shall dissociate itself from the Dutch section of the Bolshevik-Leninists, or dissolve it, and make reparations to the honor of the president of the party, and (thus) to the leadership of the party and to its members.

2) The assurance by the center to respect the decisions of the different parties and not to require respect for the international discipline until the definite foundation of the Fourth International which itself, will have to establish rules on this point.

3) Assurance by the I.S. for the Fourth International that it will undertake in common the preparations for the Fourth International and will extend it to the greatest possible number of groups who declare themselves in agreement with the fundamental principles of the Declaration of Four of 1933, and the Open Letter of 1935.

The meeting decides to participate in the conference of the I.S. only insofar as these conditions are fulfilled.

It calls on all comrades of the party to disseminate without weakening the idea of the Fourth International, and to struggle for the foundation of the Fourth International, while the leadership of the party will continue to look for and to keep up relations with parties and "points of contact" which are ready to take part in this preparatory work and to create an information service devoted to the Fourth International in process of formation.

For the RSAP this alternative remains valid:

either the Fourth International or disappearance into barbarism! Arise for revolutionary marxism! Long live the international proletariat!

The above resolution will be communicated to parties and groups outside of the Second and Third Internationals.

We proceed now to the problems and tasks of the Bolshevik-Leninists in Holland. Here is their resolution, published in "De Enige Weg," February 18, 1938:

The Task of the Bolshevik-Leninists and the Fourth International

The task of a revolutionary party is to give political leadership to the proletarian struggle and to achieve this leadership on the basis of its program. The first condition necessary to this end is: to analyze each stage which the class struggle passes through and to establish a policy and strategy which will answer the requirements of each period.

The Second International was founded on this principle. The development of capitalism, which rendered the masses susceptible to the illusion of reformism, brought about the degeneration of the Second International, the consequence of which was to fling it into the mire of chauvinism.

Its task was taken over by the Third International, able to lean upon the experience of the Russian revolution which showed the correctness of the Bolshevik program.

The delay of the world revolution, the continued isolation of the first workers' state, was the cause of the thermidorian evolution in the U.S.S.R., and has led to the degeneration of the Third International, which has become a tool in the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy. If the crumbling of the German proletariat without a struggle and the easy victory of Hitler fascism might give rise to the idea that the proletariat was incapable of struggle, later events in Austria, in Belgium, in France, in America, but above all in Spain have shown the world the capabilities of the proletariat.

It has become evident that it is not the struggle of the proletarian masses which is lacking, but that there is lacking a revolutionary party to lead the struggle of the proletariat to victory. The conscious factor of the Russian revolution was the Bolshevik Party, which knew how to follow a policy permitting it to gain the leadership of the masses in that revolution. This is a lesson of historic world importance.

The future of the proletariat depends on the building of a world party of social revolution - a party which can understand the laws of the revolutionary epoch, which can thereby understand the movement of the masses in the revolution and thus become its motive force. All other parties are without value and will be crushed by history and annihilated by the bourgeoisie after they have performed their lackey's tasks.

Character of a Revolutionary Party

This task ought to be accomplished in all countries by the

revolutionary parties, which exchange experiences in the international organization. In this period of preparation, this task must be one of ideology above all. Revolutionary parties are born in the midst of intense ideological strife, while basing themselves on the experience of the class struggle. In this struggle they build their cadres; the cadres of the new parties must learn the lessons of the victories and defeats of the proletariat and base upon them their tactics and strategy for the future. It is only thus that they will be able to gain influence among the masses. It is not enough to point out the degeneration of the Second and Third Internationals; it is necessary to show theoretically the causes that have brought it about.

* The organizational structure of the revolutionary party is democratic centralism. A centralized vanguard is necessary in order to lead the struggle of the masses to victory. And inner-party democracy is an obligatory condition without which the party cannot arrive at a correct Marxist policy. Marxism is the most advanced form of proletarian thought, and can result only from collective effort. In this way nuclei are formed which are ready to pass into action at the decisive moments because they express the real interests of the proletariat, and thus they attract the masses.

The R.S.A.P.

In Holland the R.S.A.P. has come out for the Fourth International. This has no intrinsic significance if the party is unwilling to declare itself for the program of the Fourth International and to make this program the guiding line for its own policy. Until the party is ready to work out collectively a program to become the guiding line for its activities, it must fall into political opportunism, and is forced to scan the horizon for centrist tendencies disposed to join it in forming a new edition of the London Bureau. This party will be a brake on the Fourth International as long as it is unwilling to work together in the collective theoretical labor of the international organization of the Fourth International.

The character of the R.S.A.P. has nothing in common with the character of a revolutionary party. In its ranks it has never carried on an ideological struggle; the struggle against the oppositions has always been a struggle for power.

The R.S.A.P. has lost all its influence because it believed it possible to build a party without seriously taking into account the character and tasks of a revolutionary party. At present, after the defeat in the last elections, it has still made no fundamental analysis of its program, but rather has had recourse to a desperate attempt to gain mass influence. It hoped that the degeneration of social democracy and Stalinism would automatically push the masses in the direction of the R.S.A.P. It does not see that it can become this magnetic force only if it carries on the struggle for a program in its ranks.

The leadership of the party has been able to pursue its policy

only by completely isolating its members from all international contact, by concealing all differences on the most important questions, and by putting them on the order of the day only after the split had been accomplished.

The only base the party still possesses is the N.A.S. The policy the party carried out and is still carrying out in matters concerning the N.A.S. has never been put on the party agenda. Also the policy is carried out in the dark, in such a manner that a perspective is traced neither for the party nor for the N.A.S. This policy is determined only by the leadership without the leadership knowing how to give it a base. Above all it will have fatal consequences for the N.A.S., while the party forgets its most essential task - the construction of cadres.

The Bolshevnik-Leninist Opposition

It is quite otherwise that the BL opposition developed in the R.S.A.P. It put on the order of the day discussion on: the Spanish question and the Fourth International, the trade union question, and the question of committees. That was the only way to make the party a living party. The party leadership did not fight this opposition politically, and since it will not do so, it can only suppress all opposition organizationally. But this opposition will be maintained in spite of the expulsions already carried out.

The Task of the Bolshevnik-Leninists

It follows necessarily that now the task of the BL. must be also continued from outside the party. It is for this reason that the BL group has been constituted. It is for this reason that the Enige Weg is being published.

The leadership of the R.S.A.P. uses this to emphasize that the BL is a manifestation hostile to the party. We categorically reject this accusation; the split was accomplished by the leadership of the party.

The attitude of the party leadership has done enormous harm to the idea of a revolutionary party in Holland and the idea of the Fourth International.

Instead of clearly and concisely explaining this idea, it has fostered confusion. The task of explaining what a revolutionary party must be in order to accomplish its task as vanguard has fallen now to the BL. It is they who must lead the ideological struggle which is so necessary, and who must defend the Marxist point of view on the most pressing problems of our epoch. It will be necessary to build in Holland cadres capable of expressing the Bolshevnik point of view on the Spanish question; able, on this basis, to understand how in a revolutionary situation the masses can be detached from the bourgeois and reformist ideology, which are related; and knowing how to show the way the masses can settle their accounts with the reformist

organizations and oppose to them their own mass organizations - councils of workers and peasants. This also means that we should be able to give a correct political analysis of the Popular Front, an analysis that will dispel the illusion that the parties of the popular front can be driven to a correct class policy by diplomatic bargaining (the R.S.A.P. with regard to the P.O.U.M.).

It is only after having established these positions that the danger of falling into an opportunist policy on the war question can be escaped; it is only then that the correct position on the defense of the U.S.S.R. in an imperialist war can be determined.

The essential task of the BL consists, then, in the formation of cadres; and that can be accomplished only in close relationship with the masses. This relationship with the masses can be obtained only if we are ready to unite our own fate with that of the masses, only if we are ready to participate in the struggles of the masses. The relationship with the masses can be established only in the factories and shops. But for that it is necessary to adopt a correct policy with regard to the trade union movement. The refusal to work in these organizations can lead only to a policy of isolation. But the trade union movement ought to be considered above all as a trade union movement. It is necessary to denounce its character of compromise and its liaison with the State. This task should be effected on the basis of Bolshevik fundamentals.

The task of the BL can thus be summarized as the following:

- 1) To work together for a program of action.
- 2) To build cadres.
- 3) To establish relationships with the masses.

It is only thus that fertile work for the Fourth International and the proletarian struggle can be carried on.

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JANUARY 23 RESOLUTION OF THE BOLSHEVIK-LENINISTS OF HOLLAND

On January 23, 1938, the BL comrades of Holland held a conference at which the first resolution on the tasks of the BL was adopted. The I.S. asked, however, that this resolution not be published on account of a disagreement that will be set forth later. Here are a few passages from that resolution; the omitted parts agree more or less with the resolution above:

... This party (the R.S.A.P.), arising from the fusion of the R.S.P. and the O.S.P., included different tendencies resulting on the one hand from the work of the left wing of the social democratic party and on the other from the opposition to the trade union tactic of the Third International and the C.P. of Holland.

The development of the R.S.A.P. after the fusion was characterized by the rise of several oppositions in the party which found their expression in (a) Molenaar's opposition; (b) the departure of

Schmidt and Stien de Zeeuw; (c) the BI opposition. The manner in which the R.S.A.P. dealt with these oppositions was decisive for the character of the party and shows the value it will have in the class struggle. A Leninist party can only be born through ideological struggle. Now to dispose of oppositions in a bureaucratic way in itself leads to sectarianism, and the party will lose all value for the class struggle. The Molenaar opposition expressed in the party the point of view of the London Bureau. Although the struggle in the party against the Molenaar opposition was waged apparently on the basis of the program of the Fourth International and against the centrist tendency in the party, the recent attitude, especially toward the international center for the Fourth International and toward the Spanish revolution, demonstrated that the leadership of the party has the same centrist point of view as the Molenaar opposition. The struggle against the opposition was therefore not a struggle for a program but a struggle for power. Nor is it by chance that the principal defenders of the point of view of the party leadership at the time of the Molenaar opposition - Schmidt and Stien de Zeeuw - a little later fell into the position of the Second International.

The absence of program within the R.S.A.P. has led to a policy after the fusion of the party seeking exclusively to win an alleged mass influence solely for the purpose of strengthening the parliamentary fraction.

This policy, not being based on a Bolshevik program, inevitably led to a fiasco and a considerable diminution of the relative influence of the party. How far this procedure has already advanced appears clearly from the grave defeat suffered by the party at the time of the 1937 elections. This defeat should have been the occasion for a fundamental analysis of the party. The summer conference which we held at Beckbergen on the 3rd and 4th of July, 1937, did exactly the opposite. While it was clear that the party had not even been able to maintain its influence, the cause was not sought in the policy of the party, but rather this policy was freed of all responsibility. Without an analysis of fundamentals, the party came out for a policy of "committees." That means the party wants to be only a mass organization, which cannot prevent a new disillusion....

The evolution of the R.S.A.P. is that of a centrist party. The principal reason for this is discoverable in the fact that from its creation, in both the R.S.P. and the O.S.P., account has never been taken of the problems and tasks of a revolutionary party.

As far as the R.S.P. is concerned, the cause for this should be looked for in the fact that the R.S.P. was formed in opposition to the trade union policy of the Third International, and was nourished on the illusion that a revolutionary party could develop on the basis of the N.A.S. without engaging in a struggle for a Bolshevik program within its ranks. Because of this, it could not become a factor making war on centrism in the new party - which should have been its principal task - but itself became the prey of centrism.

It was against this that the BI opposition developed in the party. It sets for itself the purpose of leading the struggle in the party

for a Bolshevik program. That struggle is impossible in a centrist party without the formation of a faction. The measures taken by the party against this faction on an organizational basis mark the bureaucratic character of the party. These measures do not obviate the necessity of the opposition's carrying on the struggle within the party. In this struggle against the centrist policy the opposition should work out its program.

The party has shown itself incapable of taking a Bolshevik position on the following problems: (a) party and mass action; (b) the party and the trade union movement; (c) the program of the Fourth International; (d) the Spanish revolution. In addition, there already exist clear symptoms that the leadership of the party is modifying its position concerning the attitude a revolutionary party ought to take towards the defense of the U.S.S.R., from which must ultimately flow an incorrect position on the dictatorship of the proletariat. Already the leadership of the party has adopted another position on the tasks of the Young Leninist Guard without asking the party's opinion. Thus the party will no longer be able to carry on a fundamental discussion of these problems. The party leadership will tend to modify positions in an automatic fashion. That will mean that these positions, as well as those still to be adopted, cannot actually be the spiritual property of the party, but will serve only as decorative fringes.

Whatever the proclamations of the leadership, through them the party is destined to sink into the hybrid of the London Bureau. The task of the BL opposition is to give full information and to lead a discussion in the party.

That is why it sets as its purpose: (a) the formation of a faction within the party; (b) the publication of an organ and internal bulletins; (c) the publication of pamphlets; (d) the formation of cadres. The measures which have already been taken against the members of the faction place this question before the opposition: what attitude should those expelled take? They ought to struggle for their readmission into the party, which nevertheless does not preclude their grouping themselves together outside the party.

The BL opposition did not want to be expelled from the party. It emphasizes that the initiative was taken by the leadership of the party. It wanted to revitalize the party. The formation of a BL oppositional faction was not for the purpose of disrupting the party; rather, it was rendered necessary by the bureaucratic regime within the party.

In the Russian Bolshevik Party only once was the formation of factions forbidden - as a temporary measure in the fire of the civil war. Only Stalinism made that party a party without factions.....

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I.S. CRITICISM OF THE DUTCH BL

The I.S. addressed the following criticism to the Dutch BL:

You write, "It (the opposition) wanted to revitalize the party. The formation of a BL oppositional faction was not for the purpose of disrupting the party; rather, it was rendered necessary..." By transferring to the past your present perspective, you alter the whole meaning of your present tactic. As a consequence, you ought to change your name to the "Bolshevik-Leninist Group," that is to say, to present yourself as an independent group which among other things is carrying on factional work in the R.S.A.P. The resolution means that you want to bet on two horses - the present faction in the R.S.A.P., and the future new party. By that policy you will lose on both. At least you are making your work very difficult because the comrades whom you must still win are not as lightmindedly ready as the leadership to envisage the ruin of the R.S.A.P. In telling them that the present factional work serves only to found a new party tomorrow, that is to say a house competing with the R.S.A.P., you needlessly repel them. The leadership of the R.S.A.P. has not yet given decisive proof of its betrayal in the eyes of the membership, even the discontented members. We pointed out the necessity of the Fourth International not because of the bureaucratization of the Communist International (the practice of expulsions had already begun a number of years before 1933) but only after the German defeat. It seems to us that you repeat with regard to the R.S.A.P. and the new party Sneovliot's error regarding the C.I. and the Fourth International (because it was not his merit but a great error that led him to call for the Fourth International as early as 1929): The struggle of the oppositional faction for the reform of the R.S.A.P. ought to be carried out to the finish, that is to say until the end with reform as the watchword. It is altogether evident that you ought to lead this struggle - as did in its time the Left Opposition - from the outside as well. It is also evident that you should try to intervene in an independent way in the class struggle and to follow an independent policy.

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REPLY OF THE DUTCH BL

The Bolshevik-Leninist comrades, though suspending the publication of their resolution, did not accept the criticism of the I.S. In their letter of January 15, they informed us that they had formed a Bolshevik-Leninist group and that thereby the reproach of an ambiguous and inefficacious policy collapsed. Here are the principal arguments from their letter:

It is useless to speak of the reform of the party, since the symptoms indicate that there can be no question of reform. Without doubt we ought to devote all our attention to the R.S.A.P. and utilize every possibility for influencing the membership of the party. However, this work cannot be done with the purpose of rendering the

party healthy, but in order to lay the foundation for a new party by taking away from Sneevliet the possibility of his maintaining the fiction of his party. The liaison with the N.A.S. provides him with this possibility; for him to succeed in safeguarding the party from ruin, there is none.

Your arguments against our resolution, and probably also against our decision to form a group, seem weak to us. They are moreover in contradiction to the letters of L.D. Your first reason is that we drive away the militants. What is there in this? The militants whom we can influence are those who are not penetrated by the mentality of the N.A.S. (It is necessary to understand this state of mind to realize how disastrous is the effect of the planless activity of the party in this domain.) Those who have been affected by it will be repelled by everything we might advance and are of no importance to the class struggle. The small number of those who can be influenced and who are still in the party, on the other hand, would not be driven away by it.

We can influence the militants only by saying openly what is, and by showing them that the R.S.A.P. has become a danger by the confusion it sows, through which it does great harm to the idea of the party in Holland and the Fourth International.

You say also that the party militants would not concede as rapidly as the leadership the ruin of the party. Here it is necessary to make a distinction between the members. Those who are indissolubly linked to the apparatus, or who enjoy little advantages through it, or who have been connected with the N.A.S. for years, and imbued with the typically sectarian state of mind of the N.A.S., these cannot be won, nor do they have any value whatsoever. The others have long since ceased having any confidence in the party; they can be saved for the idea of a revolutionary party only if a new perspective is offered them. We can open this perspective for them only if we have the courage to recognize that there exists but a shadow of the Dutch party, maintained only for reasons of prestige in order to give a political covering to the leadership and to the N.A.S. This leadership is interested in having its game facilitated - which we should do if we did not say openly that it is henceforth impossible to give flesh to this shadow.

As early as September, Sneevliet declared in personal conversation that the best thing the leadership could hope for was an opposition that had as its exclusive purpose the regeneration of the party; but such an opposition would have no future. He has sufficient confidence that his bureaucratic machine would be able to do away with it.

In your opinion, our first task ought now to be the imposition of a congress on the party leadership. As was said above, this demand is propagated by us. However, we understand very well that it is impossible to impose it. As soon as we pose this question, we are cut off without more ado....

Our agitation in the local sections, whether carried on as a group or as an opposition, is considered to be the greatest of

crimes. Whoever supports us is marked by the leadership of the party; as an opposition, we cannot influence them; moreover, they need a perspective for which they would be willing to fight. The letter of L.D. is of such importance because it indicates complete rupture. There is no other way. Our "Enige Weg" is ridiculed by Sneevliet, but the effect of this will be trifling if we know how to cut it short.

There is in our minds no other way than to accept all the consequences, and for that it is necessary to act as a group. The R.S.A.P. bears so little resemblance to a revolutionary party that one can hope for success only through the most open and bitter struggle for the development of the opposition in the party. Besides, the militants would not understand our not taking this step. They have lost confidence in the party all along the line. The great danger that exists is their losing all confidence in the revolutionary idea. Numerous comrades wait expectantly on the sidelines, because they cannot easily admit that we shall succeed where no other tendency has yet succeeded.

The set-back of the R.S.A.P. has resulted in such disillusion that it is no longer possible to revive the will of the members to fight for the reform of the party, for they see only too well that it would end in a new check, and thus prove futile.

There remains now your argument that we are committing the same fault as Sneevliet who wanted to construct a party without having led to a finish the fight against the Third International. This comparison cannot be made. Besides, the R.S.A.P. has already been tested on the Spanish question and hopelessly failed. This does not mean that we do not want to lead the opposition in the party to the end. We shall continue it with all our forces. The disagreement is as to under what form it should best be done? One would imagine that the present foundation of the group was the fruit of an ideological error, which would lead to our continuing the path without a program.

It is understood that the R.S.A.P. has left us a heritage which has the effect of a brake. We do not underestimate this. All our attentions ought to be directed towards not committing the same errors as the leadership of the R.S.A.P.

The elaboration of a program of action is equally pressing; the solution of this task will show in what measure we are capable of fulfilling our mission, and alone will prevent us from falling into the same errors as Sneevliet.

The name "N.A.S." and R.S.A.P. cut us off from the Dutch proletariat. There is no other possibility of the Fourth International's working in Holland except by declaring openly that the R.S.A.P. has become an obstacle in the path, that its reform is an impossibility, and that it is necessary to embark upon new paths. That alone will open for us the road towards the union members and the factory workers, but besides that this is also the way to form a real opposition in the heart of the party.

Our decision to form a group was made without informing you or asking your advice. Thereby it might be thought that we wish to act in the same manner as the leadership of the R.S.A.P.

and that the advice of the international organization is nothing to us. This is not at all the case. We were obliged to act thus not only because the publication of our paper forced us to do so, but because the majority of our comrades were no longer in agreement with an ambiguous attitude. We realize too well the necessity of remaining closely linked with the international work for us not to be expected to obey discipline.

We understand very well that you could not immediately advise the formation of a new group, and that you had to insist on our calling ourselves the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition of the R.S.A.P. especially in view of the fact that many sections, not being familiar with the Dutch situation, might reproach you with having acted too vigorously against the leadership of the R.S.A.P.

In our opinion, there can be no further yielding lest we lose every possibility of doing serious work in Holland. Well-informed before and during the conference, the sections could reproach you at most, in our opinion, with having acted too compliantly, and the formation of a BL group in Holland should be welcomed.

The Political Bureau of the
Holland-CBL

LETTER OF TROTSKY, JANUARY 21, 1938

Coyoacan, D. F.
January 21, 1938

To the International Secretariat,
Copy to all Sections:

Dear Comrades,

It is quite possible that my last letter was not sufficiently explicit, since you have suggested the idea that I retain some illusions on the attitude and on the plans of Comrade Sneevliet. No, unfortunately, after five years of uninterrupted experience, I am not able to permit myself the least illusion. The sole reproach that we can make against ourselves, and I am not excluded in this, is the same as that in the case of Nin: we have been too patient, too indulgent, too tolerant towards the attitude of Comrade Sneevliet. It is always difficult in cases of this nature to ascertain the moment when it is necessary to pass to open struggle. I believe that this moment was determined by the intervention of Sneevliet on the Spanish question. His attitude in this question was an open betrayal of the most elementary principles of revolutionary Marxism and of all our decisions. It is he and his kind who have prompted on the part of the P.O.U.M. added confidence in their own confusion and added distrust toward revolutionary Marxism. We know the result.

Unfortunately, it was precisely at this time that the Moscow trials supervened, the internment, etc. All our sections were absorbed over these new questions and the Dutch problem continued to drag on. The I.S. has done its duty. All that the I.S. has written about and against Sneevliet was and still is absolutely correct. That is precisely the reason why Sneevliet has never dared to respond with political arguments, utilizing instead, and that is his manner, abusive language absolutely intolerable and not at all justified. Sneevliet does not take the least interest in Marxism, in theories, in a general orientation. What interests him is the N.A.S., a tiny bureaucratic machine, a parliamentary post. Sneevliet utilizes the banner of the Fourth International above all in order to protect his opportunistic work in Holland. Since the N.A.S. depends financially entirely upon the government, Sneevliet has evaded all precise politics, that is to say, Marxist politics, in order not to provoke the thunder of the government against the N.A.S. The R.S.A.P. has not been and still is nothing more than a political appendage of the N.A.S., which itself is not viable and which has fallen in the last years from 25,000 to 12,000 members and very likely still lower.

On the Spanish question, on the question of the Popular Front, not to speak of internal Dutch politics, Sneevliet occupies a position that is not in any way superior to that of the parties adhering to the London Bureau. Moreover, he has never concealed having a double connection with the I.S. and with the London Bureau. Practically, he broke connections with

the I.S., it is my belief, a year ago or more. He has utilized this time in order to prepare his organization for the definitive rupture. He has always refused to engage in an honest discussion of the differences. On the question of Reiss he behaved in an absolutely disloyal manner toward the Russian section, greatly contributing to the tragic denouement.

The I.S. in my opinion has done all that it could in order to facilitate collaboration, and we cannot reproach it with not having succeeded in changing the nature of the leadership of the R.S.A.P., thoroughly opportunistic, syndicalist, and anti-Marxist. That is the incontrovertible conclusion of a long experience. If I proposed that you write a letter once more to Sneevliet, inviting him to participate in the International Conference and demanding the participation of his party in the international discussion, this was not because I personally have the slightest illusions but because I am under the impression that the other sections, particularly those of the New World, have not sufficiently followed the involved development of this problem and that someone might entertain the impression that it could possibly be the incorrect "methods" of the I.S. and not organic opportunism on the part of the R.S.A.P. leadership which has pushed Sneevliet into preparing a break from the Fourth International and eventual adhesion to the London Bureau. (no one has forgotten, I hope, that Sneevliet obstinately fought the resolution of our last International Conference on the London Bureau. This is not astonishing; he felt himself concerned over this resolution.) On December 2, 1937, I sent Sneevliet a personal letter where I made a final endeavor to extract his reply. He has not responded to this letter. Hence I send a copy of this letter to all sections.

It is necessary that the Dutch question take its place in the international discussion preceding the Conference. It is a question in the first place of analysing the trade union experience of Sneevliet in order to exclude once for all the possibility of analogous policies in other sections. We see that they toy here and there with the idea of "their own" trade unions. This policy signifies inevitable ruin. The Fourth International cannot tolerate such a policy in its ranks without inviting death. On this question as on others, the Dutch experience teaches us what must not be done.

I am simultaneously sending an open letter to the press of the R.S.A.P. and I enclose a copy for you.

Leon Trotsky

RESOLUTION OF THE I.S.

9. In answer to the above resolution of the RSAP, dated March 13, 1938, the I.S. has just adopted, on April 25, 1938, the following resolution on the Dutch RSAP:

The I.S. takes note of the resolution adopted by the leadership of the RSAP on March 13, 1938, concerning the attitude of the latter toward the I.S. for the Fourth International.

It states that the RSAP once more denounces the bankruptcy of the II and III Internationals and continues to proclaim the necessity of a IV International and to base itself on the Declaration of ~~Four~~ of December, 1933, and the Open Letter for the IV International of July, 1935.

This position ought logically to imply an engagement to participate actively in the ideological, political and organizational life of the movement for the IV International, and to share the responsibilities for building it. Now the leadership of the RSAP has never entered into this engagement.

It has constantly and bureaucratically refused to make the RSAP in its entirety participate in the life of the movement for the IV International. It did not carry out any serious work in the period when the Bureau for the IVth International was located in Amsterdam. It did not make any contribution to the elaboration of the program of the IVth International; it avoided all collaboration in the leadership of the movement for the IVth International. It refused to accept the decisions democratically arrived at by our movement, and in fact was opposed to a discussion of them within its own party.

On the other hand, it followed, in Holland, Spain, and internationally, a policy diametrically opposed to the Bolshevik principles and decisions of the movement for the IV International, and entered into open struggle against the latter. In order to avoid its responsibilities, it then broke with our movement, and, to hide the bankruptcy of its opportunist policy, bureaucratically expelled from the ranks of the RSAP the comrades who struggled in the party for a Bolshevik program and policy.

The present resolution is only an integral part of this policy, which consists in concealing its opportunism from the Dutch workers by revolutionary proclamations for the IVth International, and, at the same time, in discrediting by its policies the very idea of the IVth International.

1) The resolution, which violently attacks the movement for the IVth, is completely silent about the London Bureau. Even more, the leadership decides to send its resolution to the parties of this Bureau and thus provides weapons to our adversaries. Such a policy can only signify a return to the centrist morass, despite all the pretty proclamations.

2) The leadership of the RSAP attacks the tactic of entry into the socialist parties the better to conceal the criminal character of its policy in the principle question of trade-union unity. The leadership of the RSAP attacks the policy of "split" of the IS the better to hide its policy of unity with the worst centrists and to attempt to make the IS shoulder the responsibility for the expulsion of the Dutch Bolshevik-Leninists, for which it alone is responsible.

3) The leadership of the RSAP attacks the IS in order to conceal the fact that it refused to occupy the two seats in the Bureau which the international conference of 1936 accorded it.

4) The internal life of our movement suffers from great material difficulties; the leaders of the RSAP are not the least responsible for this. But it is based completely on democratic centralism. Any other affirmation is a lie and only serves to conceal the unwholesome regime of bureaucratic centralism which prevails in the RSAP.

5) The I.S. makes the following response to the conditions posed by the leadership of the RSAP for joint preparation of the International Conference:

a) The IS is deeply desirous of declaring its full solidarity with the comrades of the Bolshevik-Leninist Group of Holland. It emphasizes once more that if the IS addresses itself directly to the members of the RSAP by means of internal bulletins, it is only because it has been forced to do so by the disloyal and anti-democratic attitude of the leaders of the RSAP. It is also the leadership of the RSAP which assumed the responsibility for the expulsion of the comrades who approved the political line of the IS. The dissolution of the Bolshevik-Leninists as an external group depends only on a decision for reintegration on the part of the RSAP leadership. The liquidation of factions within the RSAP depends on the existence within the latter of a healthy democratic regime permitting all comrades to express their opinions before the whole party.

b) The IS has never made any calumnious accusations against Sneevliet as an individual. It has accused and still accuses the latter of determining his policies not in the immediate and historic interests of the international proletariat but in order to preserve the NAS, of which he is a paid functionary, as an independent organization, a goal which can not be reached save by a policy of concession to the bourgeois state. In doing this the IS only lived up to the basic duty of every revolutionary; to speak the truth. The IS will be able to change its evaluation of Sneevliet's policies only to the extent that he completely changes his orientation in the trade union question.

c) The leadership of the RSAP refuses to recognize any international discipline prior to the foundation of the IVth International. Thereby it reveals the formalistic character of its policy. The foundation of the IVth International will never be accomplished by a notary's stamp, as in the founding of an anonymous society. Its existence as an organization is only the result of the struggle to elaborate a scientific Marxist-Leninist program which translates the profound aspirations and historic interests of the working class. In the measure that the Bolshevik-Leninists have elaborated this program, in the measure that, with a policy conforming to this program, they struggle tenaciously to root this program among the masses, they already constitute the political and organizational nucleus of the IVth International; they already are the IVth International in its first stage, the axis around which will gather the workers who understand the treason of the reformist and Stalinist leaders and the bankruptcy of their centrist and anarchist satellites. Whoever accepts the program of the IVth International must also accept its discipline. Whoever refuses its discipline really declares himself for another program. The leadership of the RSAP ought to have the courage to say what its opinions really are.

d) The leadership of the RSAP, which accepts in principle the

idea of the IVth International, desires however that the conference be organized on the basis of the Declaration of Four and of the Open Letter of August, 1935. Thereby it seems to indicate that it refuses to discuss the Spanish experience and the international experience of the last three years. Precisely because it bases itself on 1933 and 1935, the IS cannot agree that the extremely important experiences accumulated by the vanguard in this period should not be the subject of a discussion. An International Conference which does not pronounce itself categorically on these questions would be a mere comedy, with which the IS would not associate itself for a single instant.

e) The IS takes note of the desire expressed by the leadership of the RSAP to participate in the preparation of a Conference of the movement for the IVth International in connection with the IS. It replies to the propositions of the latter with the following conditions:

A) Participation of the RSAP leadership in the political discussion through precise counter-theses on each of the points of divergence; communication of its theses to all the sections in sufficient time to permit a discussion. Active participation in the material preparation for the Conference.

B) Extraordinary Congress of the RSAP to discuss democratically the theses and counter-theses in preparation for the International Conference. Participation of delegates from the IS at the Congress of the RSAP.

C) Readmission of the comrades expelled for political propaganda in favor of the positions of the IS; organization of a loyal discussion with the IS.

D) Agreement by the RSAP leadership to submit to international discipline after the Conference, the Conference being obliged to settle for good the Dutch questions.

The present resolution of the IS should then be considered as a new invitation to the RSAP to be represented at the International Conference, with a willingness to assume its responsibility there in collaboration with the other organizations adhering to the movement for the IVth International.

(This resolution may and ought to be published)

TROTSKY LETTER OF JULY 18, 1936

To the Central Committee of the RSAFP
Amsterdam.

Dear Comrades:

I reply herewith to your letter of July 11th, unfortunately with a one day's delay caused by unfavorable circumstances.

1) You write that you are ready to send two delegates to the conference ("if the organizational affairs will be considered as the first point.") For my part, naturally, I am not opposed to dealing with the organizational affairs at any point, even the first, if that appears necessary. However, the question can only be decided by the conference itself and I do not see how this matter could be decided in advance. Since I cannot consider your letter as an ultimatum to a not yet convened conference, I conceive the matter in this light, that you reserve the right to insist at the conference itself that the organizational questions be advanced to the first point. Despite the fact that such a procedure seems to me quite irregular and conflicts with my whole experience, I would not make this matter a disputed question and, as for myself, I would accept your proposal. Unfortunately, I do not see any concrete proposals on your part. That our international organization reveals great defects, is indisputable; many of these defects, I hope, can be remedied, especially if the Dutch party henceforth does what is necessary in the international organizational work. The most important weaknesses, however, lie in the very nature of our organization, since it is persecuted by all governments. We have no liberty of movement. A part of our leading comrades are in the position of political emigration (I, for example, am among them.) This is something that just cannot be talked away. The Russian leadership was always distributed between two and often enough three centers. The bulk of the Central Committee was in Russia. The emigrants, among them Lenin, were abroad. Despite that however, they played a certain role in the movement, and often a not entirely bad role. Because of the spatial remove, however, there arose at all times difficulties and friction, which often assumed threatening forms. This can now be very well followed with the aid of the published correspondence carried on for decades. In Europe, under normal conditions, things were different. But the good old times are now gone for Europe too. We must adapt ourselves to the very specific conditions which constantly grow worse for us all. There is no recipe for this state of affairs to be found anywhere. If one puts great store by mutual collaboration, he must also take into the bargain the negative sides of the certain organizational dispersal that exists. The pre-conference in Berna was proposed precisely for the purpose of making the work of the conference in Geneva as profitable and smooth as possible. I waited a month and a half for this conference. Unfortunately, it did not take place. Also, neither I nor anyone else have, to this day, received any organizational proposals. It is always hard to treat proposals at a conference which have not been brought to the attention of the conference participants in advance. For you will surely understand that it is not only your party that is interested in considering all the important questions beforehand, but also the other organizations. Yet you make the matter still harder by the fact that in your last letter you do not describe by a single word

that which you regard as organizational questions. Nevertheless - as stated - I would be prepared, for my part, to devote half of the first day to organizational questions, at least in order to introduce the discussion and to acquaint those present with what the concrete proposals consist of. Then, if final decisions are not immediately arrived at, a commission could be formed to prepare the proposals which could then be brought to the latter half of the closing day of the conference for discussion and final decision. In any case, all these are only suggestions - not binding - on my part.

2) The most important question, however, is the French revolution. I greatly regret, dear comrades, that I find nothing about it in your letter, unfortunately, also, much too little in your paper. The fate of Europe, of Holland included and thereby also of your party, is being decided today not in Holland but in France. I recall that about a year or a year and a half ago there was an editorial comment in the "Nieuwe Waker" to an article of a comrade of the Bolshevik-Leninists, with something of the following content (I do not have the paper to hand): We do not agree "that the French situation is more important than the German or English." This way of putting the question is abstract and therefore incorrect. It is not a question of the comparison of the historical importance of the various countries, but of the correct evaluation of the revolutionary world conjuncture. The fate of the international working class for decades to come is being decided today in France. Our French section - despite all its difficulties and weaknesses, which I know very well - has become a historical factor which far overshadows all the other sections. To refuse to perceive this would be, at least in my eyes, a symptom of opportunistic blindness. We must support our French section with all our forces, more than our national sections and organizations, for if we take a great step forward in France in the course of the coming months, it will be of immeasurable significance in all the other countries, also, for example, for the impending Dutch elections. If I might translate my thoughts into the language of commerce, 100 Gulden invested now in France would, in the coming period, yield a greater interest than 1,000 Gulden in Holland, Russia or England. That is why I see with a certain apprehension the fact that you actually overlook the question, and even make your participation in the conference dependent, to a certain degree, upon general "organizational" questions which we shall yet settle and which we shall always have to settle over again in the course of years to come. I regarded the conference in the first place as the gathering of the international staff for the purpose of making the French question the international question, and that in every respect.

3) It seems to you superfluous to have to adopt a position towards the London Bureau at the conference. Under no circumstances can I express my agreement with this. The worst obstacle for us, the most malignant enemy, is the London Bureau and its affiliated organizations. Your cartoonist, whom I always admire, recently depicted the II and III Internationals as two dogs let loose upon the IV International by imperialism. Unfortunately, he forgot to present the small, mangy cur who scampers around our legs, snarls at us, snaps at our calves and seeks by this to prevent us from finishing off the big dogs. This is no subordinate question. What the SAP-ILFists signify in a revolutionary period, is shown again by Larceau Rivort and Godsfroid in France and in Belgium. The

ILPists are not one whit better than the CPists. This they have amply demonstrated by their evolution in the last two years. As the situation becomes more threatening and more filled with responsibility, the more reactionary and - to us - more inimical do all these old, slick, incorrigible opportunists and pacifists become. One does not fight for the IV International by flirting with them in a closed room, by attendance on them, by parlor visits to them, etc. etc. - for all this only gives them an exaggerated opinion of their own importance and incites them to further invasions into our own ranks; no, one fights for the IV International only by pitilessly exposing these little gentlemen and calling them by their right name.

4) Let us take the ILP question. I really cannot reproach myself with any precipitateness on this question. For years I followed the evolution of this party, quite calmly and objectively. After Schmidt's and Fattern's visit to me, from which I learned a great deal, I wrote a series of articles and letters of an entirely friendly kind to the ILP people, sought to enter into personal contact with them and counselled our English friends to join the ILP in order, from within, to go through the experience systematically and to the very end. Since the last visit of comrades A. and M. I formulated my observations in this sense, that there isn't much to be done with the ILP. The three of us worked out a definite proposal for our British comrades (a manifesto to the party, collection of signatures, etc.). Comrade Schmidt went to England and judged the plan to be incorrect. Naturally, this was not without its influence on the comrades, as well as on me. I immediately said to myself: Schmidt knows the situation in the ILP better than I do; perhaps he sees in the ILP such aspects as escape me; therefore the decision should perhaps be postponed in order to see the effect of the latest big events (the war in Abyssinia, etc.) at the coming party conference of the ILP. To lose two to three months in a critical period is always a great loss. But it seemed to me, after comrade Schmidt's intervention, that it is necessary to go through this new experience. Well, it is now already behind us. To continue now with an effort to revive the illusion which has been shattered to bits, would be nothing less than to inflict a bad service on the cause. In times of calm, one can live on illusions for a long period; in a period of crisis, if one does not take into account the hard facts, that is, the actual policy of Contrism and pacifism, and consequently their deeds, but considers one's own wishes and sentiments, one courts the danger of becoming the shadow of the Contrists and pacifists and of compromising and destroying one's own organization. That is why I deem it absolutely necessary for our comrades to break openly with the ILP and to transfer to the Labour party where, as is shown especially by the experience in the Youth, much more can be accomplished.

5) You complain in your letter that many parties have carried through tactical turns without preceding international discussion and decision. This complaint does not appear correct to me, especially to the extent that it refers to the American party. The discussion there was extended for more than a year and moreover it was based upon the previous French discussion and experience. The discussion had an international character. All sections, without exception, took a position on it. The American friends knew quite well the sentiments prevalent in the various sections. Naturally, they could not carry through an international referendum. At the last moment the leadership, considering the

situation at the time as highly favorable, took the decision upon itself. It would not have been worthy of the name of a revolutionary leadership if it did not have the courage to make independent decisions. That this leadership is however, permeated with a truly internationalist spirit, is demonstrated by the fact that two of its representatives have come in order to render an accounting and to take full responsibility for their conduct before the international forum. This seems to me to be the GENUINE internationalism.

6) We cannot make any claim to leading our national sections directly from a center, even if this center were much more united than it is at present. Within the bounds of the united program and the common political line, every section must necessarily lay claim to a certain elbow room in which to act. I am a little surprised that I am obliged to say this to the Dutch friends who, up to now, carried on their policy absolutely independently and in many important questions in direct contradiction with the firm opinion of the international organization. In this respect, we have always showed the greatest caution and - if you permit - the greatest forbearance, especially towards the Dutch party. We shall, I hope, also do this in the future. But we retain the right to our opinion, if not publicly (as was the case with the "Nieuwe Fakkel" with reference to Belgium and quite wrongly), then at least within the bounds of the organization. Unfortunately - and this is a reproach that I must direct primarily at my dear friend Sneevliet - the Dutch leadership is impregnated with the spirit of the greatest intolerance towards any criticism. The policy of our American or Belgian friends, to say nothing of the Germans, may be sharply criticized and rejected. But if one attempts to raise the trade union policy of the Dutch brother party, even if only in intimate circles, he is repulsed with the greatest sharpness. Precisely this spirit, which is by no means the spirit of reciprocity, evoked dissatisfaction among very many comrades, and very good ones, in all sections, and this dissatisfaction is justified! It lies in the interest of the general cause as well as of the Dutch leadership to dispel this long accumulating dissatisfaction by means of a calm and friendly exposition at the conference and to stop making a "taboo" out of the Dutch questions. This also belongs among the "organizational" questions that you want to have dealt with as the first point.

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I must unfortunately interrupt the letter in order to catch the airmail in time. You will get the second half of the letter tomorrow. I hasten, however, to say here that I have not the remotest desire or shadow of a desire to loosen contact with you, to render the already difficult position of the Dutch party more difficult or - parenthetically - to dim my friendship with Sneevliet; I need not assure you of that. I have urged a personal getting together since my arrival in Norway. If I were not bound hand and foot, I would have visited Holland two or three times this year, for I put the greatest store by personal discussions, especially with older and experienced comrades, in these fateful times. It was a holiday in our house when I received the letter that comrades Schmidt and Stien de Zeeuw wanted to take a trip here. I immediately expressed my joy over this prospect in a letter to Schmidt. Unfortunately, nothing came of it. Sneevliet too promised me a visit, but unfortunately did not keep his promise. I do not want to level reproaches on this score,

despite the fact that comrade Schmidt visited the ILF two, if not three times during this period. In the letter to Shachtman I only wanted to emphasize that a subsequent personal meeting could not replace the official conference and that your non-participation in the conference at a time like this would inevitably be interpreted by the whole public as a political rupture with all our organizations. Fortunately, your participation now seems to me to be assured and therewith we can calmly discuss the "official" and the personal matters.

With fraternal greetings,

L. TROTSKY

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TO THE CC OF THE RSAP

JULY 16, 1936

7) I now come to Spain. In one of the latest letters, comrade Sneevliet in the name of the CC of the party took up the defense of the Maurin-Nin party against my allegedly exaggerated or too sharp attacks. This not only appears to me to be unjustified but also incomprehensible. The struggle with Maurin does not date from yesterday. His entire policy during the revolution was nationalistic-provincial and petty bourgeois; reactionary by its entire essence. I recorded this fact publicly more than once from the beginning of the revolution on. Nin, too, with those vacillations proper to him, acknowledged this. The program of the "democratic-socialist" revolution is a legitimate child of the Maurinist spirit; it corresponds essentially to the program of a Blum and not of a Lenin. As for Nin, during the whole revolution he proved to be a completely passive dillitante, who does not in the slightest degree think of participating actually in the mass struggle, of winning the masses, of leading them to the revolution, etc. He contented himself with hypercritical little articles on Stalinists, on socialists, etc. This is now a very cheap commodity! During the series of general strikes in Barcelona he wrote me letters on all conceivable questions but did not mention by as much as a word the general strikes and his own role in them. In the course of those years we exchanged hundreds of letters. I always endeavored to receive from him not empty literary observations on everything and nothing, but practical indications for the revolutionary struggle. To my concrete questions, he always replied: "as to that I shall write in my next letter." This "next letter," however, never arrived - for years. The greatest misfortune for the Spanish section was the fact that a man with a name, with a certain past and the aureole of a martyr of Stalinism, stood at its head and all the while led it wrongly and paralyzed it. The splendid socialist youth came spontaneously to the idea of the IV International. To all our urgings that all attention be devoted to the socialist youth, we received only hollow evasions. Nin was concerned with the "independence" of the Spanish section, that is, with his own passivity, with his own petty political comfort; he didn't want his dillitante captiousness to be disturbed

by great events. The socialist youth then passed over almost completely into the Stalinist camp. The lads who called themselves Bolshevik-Leninists and who permitted this, or better yet, who caused this, had to be stigmatized forever as criminals against the revolution. At the moment when Nin's bankruptcy became clear even to his own supporters, he united with the nationalist-Catalonian philistine Maurin, breaking off all relations with us by the declaration that "the IS understands nothing of Spanish affairs." In reality Nin understands nothing of revolutionary policy or of Marxism.

The new party soon found itself in the tow of Azana. But to say about this fact: "It is only a small, temporary technical electoral agreement," seems to me to be absolutely inadmissible. The party under-signed the most miserable of all People's Front programs of Azana and simultaneously also its death sentence for years to come. For at every attempt at criticism of the People's Front (and Maurin-Nin are now making such desperate attempts) they will always receive the stereotyped reply from the radical bourgeois, from the social democrats and the communists: But didn't you yourselves take part in the creation of the People's Front and sign its program? And if these gentlemen then try to make use of the rotten subterfuge: "it was only a technical manoeuvre of our party" - they will only make themselves ridiculous. These people have completely paralyzed themselves, even if they were now unexpectedly to display a revolutionary will, which is not, however, the case. The small crimes and betrayals which remain almost unobserved in normal times, find a mighty repercussion in the time of revolution. It should never be forgotten that the revolution creates especial acoustic conditions. All in all, I cannot understand how it is that attenuating circumstances are sought for the Spanish betrayers, while at the same time our Belgian friends, who are fighting with pre-eminent courage against the enormous POB machine and the Stalinists and who have quite substantial successes to show, are publicly disparaged in the "Nieuw Fakkel."

8) In the latest number of "Batalla" there is an appeal of the Maurin-Nin party to our South American sections, which represents an attempt to group the latter around the so-called "Party of Marxian Unity" on a purely national basis. Like every section of the London Bureau, the Spanish "Marxian" party of confusion tries to penetrate into the ranks of the IV International, to split them, etc. There you have the little cur who snaps at our calves. Must we not say openly to our South American organizations, which still have in their ranks SAPIst parliamentarians, etc., what the difference is between us and the London Bureau and why Nin breaks with us in Europe and wants to appear in South America as the pietistic unifier of all the revolutionary forces? This contemptible hypocrisy, which always characterizes Centrist, must be pitilessly uncovered. This alone would suffice to prove the ABSOLUTE NECESSITY of our theses on the London Bureau.

9) The question of questions at present is the People's Front. The Left Centrists seek to present this question as a tactical or even as a technical manoeuvre, so as to be able to practice their little business in the shadow of the People's Front. In reality, the People's Front is the MAIN QUESTION OF PROLETARIAN CLASS STRATEGY for this epoch. It also offers the best criterion for the difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism. For it is often forgotten that the greatest historical example

of the People's Front is the February 1917 revolution. From February to October, the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionists, who represent a very good parallel to the "communists" and the social democrats, were in the closest alliance and in a permanent coalition with the bourgeois party of the Cadets, together with whom they formed a series of coalition governments. Under the sign of this People's Front stood the whole mass of the people, including the workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils. To be sure the Bolsheviks participated in the councils. But they did not make the slightest concession to the People's Front. Their demand was to break this People's Front, to rend the alliance with the Cadets and to create a genuine workers' and peasants' government. All the People's Fronts in Europe are only a pale copy and often a caricature of the Russian People's Front of 1917, which could after all lay claim to a much greater justification for its existence, for it was still a question of the struggle against Czarism and the remnants of feudalism. If Maslow and Dubois now coquette with the People's Front, with all their ultra-Leftist "intransigence," then they only prove thereby that they have not understood the real strategic antagonism between Bolshevism and Menshevism. They demanded of us that we put up the slogan "The People's Front in Power," that is, to demand the power for the coalition of the workers and the capitalists. At the same time, they made merry over our demand "Put the bourgeoisie out of the People's Front!" Hammed in somewhat with reservations, these thoughts are also to be found in an article of Maslow's in the theoretical journal of the Dutch party. For my part I can only regret this, for this fact makes the most painful impression on all of us. Do we have differences of opinion on this question, where it is a matter of choice between Bolshevism and Menshevism? Yes or no? I hope not! Then whence this inexplicable tolerance for Maslow's thoroughly opportunistic conceptions? The position of our French section in all the important questions is incomparably more correct and Marxian, even though there is no sparing of criticism of the French section in our own ranks; at you may see from the brochure of Nicolle Braun. Yet I must say that the text of the French CC "Ou va le gouvernement Blum?" is an excellent piece of work, which is worth being translated into all the languages of the IV International. As for me personally, I learned a good deal from this brochure. Yet our French comrades are so poor (for which they themselves bear the blame in large measure) that they were unable to publish the brochure in printed, but only in mimeographed form.

10) Permit me now to pass over to the Dutch party. I do not read Dutch. I only halfway decipher the titles, a few sentences, and if the matter appears important to me other comrades come to my aid. I can therefore lay no claim at all to competence in the Dutch question. Nevertheless, I follow as much as possible, by means of the European press, the life of Holland, am in correspondence with my friend Sneevliet (insofar as he replies to my letters, which is not the rule unfortunately), etc. What I say about the Dutch party can therefore only be incomplete and fragmentary:

a) The great weakness of the Dutch party seems to me to be the lack of a program of action. For more than a year we have had an exchange of opinions with Sneevliet on this score. Insofar as I may permit myself a judgment, the agitation of the party seems to me to rest far too much upon personal improvizations, upon impressions of the day or week, and therefore bears a dispersed, extensive and not a concentrated character.

A reformist party can easily reconcile itself to such a situation, but in no way a revolutionary party like the RSAP, for it can fight successfully against and finally triumph over the large parties only by means of the clarity and concentratedness of the slogans it has elaborated for the whole present epoch. Several months ago the Dutch party formed a commission to elaborate the program of action. The commission laid out, so at least it appeared to me, too extensive and too comprehensive a plan. For my part I proposed to separate the plan into two parts: first to work out a brief but conclusive program of action for Holland and then to elaborate the large program in connection with other sections as the program of the IV International. Comrade Susevlist - if I remember rightly - was also of this opinion. Unfortunately it does not appear that this commission has yet produced a single draft. At any rate, I have received none, as was promised me. It is highly regrettable that among other things also for the impending elections, we have not armed ourselves in good enough time with a sharp program of action.

b) On the trade union question too I cannot share the policy of our Dutch brother party. The reasons therefore I have often set forth in writing and especially verbally. The NAS-policy continues to be carried out only on the basis of the law of inertia. There is no deeper strategic motivation for it. The development in Holland, just as is now the case in France, will have to strike out either on the revolutionary or the Fascist road. In either case I see no place for the NAS. When the great strike wave will begin in Holland, which should be regarded as highly probable if not certain, the reformist trade unions will grow mightily, absorb fresh elements into their ranks, and in such a period the NAS will appear to the masses as an incomprehensible splinter organization. In consequence, the masses will also become unreceptive to the correct slogans of the RSAP and the leadership of the NAS. But if all the members of the RSAP and the best NAS elements were inside the reformist trade unions, then during the impending upsurge they could become the axis of crystallization of the Left wing and later on the decisive force in the labor movement. I must say quite openly: the systematic, solicitedly arranged agitation inside the reformist trade unions seems to me the only means not only of preserving the RSAP as a genuinely independent party (for by itself this hasn't any historical value), but also of carrying it to victory, that is, to power.

If we take a much less probable alternative, namely, that the development in Holland, without passing through a revolutionary upsurge, goes directly, in the coming period, into the reactionary military-bureaucratic and then into the Fascist phase, we nevertheless come to the same conclusion: The NAS policy must become an obstacle to the party. The first assault of the reaction has already been directed at the NAS and cost it half its membership. The second assault will cost it its life. The excellent workers united within it will then have to seek the road into the reformist trade unions in a dispersed manner, everyone for himself, or else remain passive and indifferent. The trade union cannot lead the illegal existence that the party can. But by means of this blow the party will be terribly hit, for an illegal revolutionary party must have a legal or semi-legal mass cover. If the bulk of the membership of the RSAP is active in the reformist trade unions, then these mass organizations signify also for the party a hiding place, a cover and at the same time an arena. The coherence of the present NAS workers is thereby preserved. All other

points will be conditioned by the course of development and by the policy of the party.

c) In the Youth question, the policy of the party does not seem to me to be sufficiently clear. I know that at the head of the Dutch Youth we have very good and very promising elements. They must, however, find their field of activity so as not to persist and to wither away in the abstract-sectarian existence of "would-be know-it-all." This field of work can be found only in the trade unions and among the reformist youth. If we continue to lose time, the Dutch youth will fall victim to Stalinism, as is the case in Spain and to a substantial degree also in England. In Belgium, despite the tardiness and despite the much too irresolute vacillating policy, certain successes were nevertheless achieved against Godefroid among the youth. In America, the socialist youth, which certainly does not represent a strong organization, has, thanks to the correct policy of our American co-thinkers, received a good anti-Stalinist inoculation and now finds itself on the right road. It would really be disastrous if our Dutch Youth section were not to understand that it must immediately devote all its forces to work within the reformist youth!

I know, dear comrades, that with many of these observations I come into sharp conflict with the views of certain leading circles of the RSAP. Nor do I lay the slightest claim, not only not for myself (that would be altogether out of the question) but also not for the impending international conference, to the right to alter, in a trice, the position of the RSAP on the decisive questions. # The other sections can only be of assistance therein, by means of responsible criticism. This letter has no other aim. What we now need is an open discussion on these questions with the Dutch friends in order to promote mutual understanding. For example, I put no concrete proposals to the conference on the Dutch trade union questions and would advise against adopting any binding decision. Our general line in the trade union question MUST be put clearly. I sought to do this in a few lines in the draft on the Franco-Belgian situation. Perhaps, too, independent trade union theses will be submitted. At all events it would be false to make an organizational ultimatum to the Dutch party out of this question. As unanimously and unambiguously as possible we state our opinion on the trade union question in general and fix this opinion in writing. We discuss openly with the Dutch comrades as to their perspectives. But we respect the special situation in Holland and leave to the Dutch comrades the working out of the necessary methods in the trade union question. THIS IS THE FORMAL PROPOSAL THAT IT PUT TO THE CONFERENCE.

11) In conclusion I should still like to say what is necessary on my letter to Shachtman: how and why did I write this letter? The initiative for the conference came from Berne on April 11. The correspondence developed in the course of April and the convocation was planned for the month of June. Thus, nobody can talk of any "precipitation" whatsoever. The fishermen's strike, I believe, did not begin in April nor even in May. In any case, every country now has its strikes and its mass movements and if we were to wait with the international conference until complete calm prevails in every country, we should never be able to hold a conference. The financial and personal difficulties exist everywhere also. All the larger sections were agreed on the necessity of convoking the conference. Only the Dutch section gave evasive answers. In that connection it did

#As in all of our sections, the necessary change can only mature from within.

not refer so much to the fishermen's strike as it did to the - in its eyes - wrong policy of the American section, to the deficiencies of the IS, to the weaknesses of the French section, etc., etc. Just at the time when we were taking part with the greatest ardor in the work of preparing the conference, of elaborating the theses, etc., there appeared in the "Nieuw Fakkel" a deplorable note on the Belgian section; also, the report on the persecutions of the French section was written in such a manner as to give the appearance of wanting to deprecate the importance of the French section. I received a letter in which comrade Sneevliet, in the name of the Dutch Central Committee, censured me for my article against Maurin-Nin.

Although the Dutch CC did not give a definite answer to the question of its participation in the conference, it proposed to us to take part "in a few months" in a conference planned by the London Bureau. Everyone who thinks politically will have to admit that these facts give sufficient cause for concern. The whole enterprise hung in mid-air for weeks and we were unable to send the American friends the promised telegram announcing the date. Finally they came to Europe of their own initiative without awaiting the telegram. This fact created a force majeure, so to speak, for the organizers of the conference. After all we could not let the American comrades return home empty-handed. Right after comrade Erik's arrival here I promptly sent Sneevliet a telegram. For more than 48 hours we received no reply to it. So I sent a second, still more urgent telegram. This was finally answered with the promise of a communication by mail. I communicated my disquietude and my apprehension to comrade Erik in a most moderate and reserved manner and asked him to plead emphatically before the Dutch comrades for their participation in the conference.

Comrade Erik had to leave us before the planned pre-conference could be held. After his departure, a letter from comrade Sha. arrived from Amsterdam, the contents of which boiled down to the fact that even now, after the arrival of the Americans, the Dutch comrades were still unable to decide in favor of participation in the conference, that they proposed a personal meeting with me for the second half of August, and that they make their participation in some eventual conference in the autumn more or less dependent upon the results of this conversation. Naturally, it would have been more advantageous to wait for the report of comrade Erik on his conversations. And that was my first thought. But then I said to myself: if comrade Erik gets the same answer as Sha. then, after the receipt of his report, there will no longer be a possibility of saving the cause of the conference. I HAD to say that to myself.

In the light of the present situation especially in France and considering the arrival of the Americans, I cannot of course explain to myself the attitude of the Dutch comrades on the grounds of lack of funds or of the fishermen's strike, but on much deeper political grounds: many leading Dutch comrades believe they can be of service to the IV International by contact with the London Bureau, that is, by collaboration with the latter and not by means of unremitting struggle against it. For a great number of comrades, however, the contact with the London Bureau signifies nothing but the break with the IV International. I considered it absolutely necessary to bring to the attention of the Dutch

comrades this deep-going difference of opinion before they adopt their final decision.

The sense of my letter was: If, despite the experience already acquired, you lay store by sitting down at one table with the SAP-ILP, etc., then you should at least take a seat at one table with us before that, in order to confer with us on this - for us - so important and decisive question. Let us hope that after all we can come to a common decision. But if you come neither to the pre-conference nor to the conference itself, and further develop your connections with the London Bureau, then we cannot evaluate the consequences of such a procedure in any other way than as the inevitable break with us.

In this critical situation I deemed it necessary to express my opinion, quite openly and without adornment, on the possible consequences of the non-participation of the Dutch friends in the conference. This I did in the letter to Sha. and I also sent a copy of the letter to Sneevliet. And I said to myself: if the Dutch comrades have finally come to the decision to seek an entirely different road to the new International than ours, then my letter will no longer hurt. But if their way of action is to be explained only by the fact that they do not ascribe sufficient importance to the thing (which I also already grasped as a disquieting symptom) then my letter will call their attention to the fact that FOR US the matter is of DECISIVE importance.

The Dutch comrades will then surely utter many a strong word about the letter, but their positions will not be determined by the question of etiquette but by the deep essence of the created situation. In addition I said to myself: Erik is fortunately still in Amsterdam. He will surely do everything to neutralize the negative psychological consequences of my intervention. But his intervention will have all the more positive results the more clearly, openly and brusquely the whole situation is disclosed.

For my letter, therefore, I and I alone bear the responsibility. I am quite ready to take any censure for it, regardless of whom it comes from, and let it fall on my shoulders. To "insult" anyone was, obviously, not my intention. It was not a question of moral charges, but of apprehensions arising out of the existence of two contrary lines. If an "insult" can be read out of my letter, I am prepared to withdraw an expression that may give any cause for it and to excuse myself, for it is really not a question of etiquette but of the French revolution and the IV International.

These are my explanations, dear comrades. I greatly regret that I cannot meet with you in Geneva, for I am certain that a personal discussion would eliminate every shadow of discord between us. But even without my presence the conference will surely eliminate the accumulated misunderstandings and create better conditions for the further collaboration.

In this spirit I extend you my hand in all friendship and wish you the best of success.

Yours,

L. T.

THE RSAP AND THE SPANISH REVOLUTION
(Two Quotations From "Nieuwe Faldkel")

"The POUM seems capable of developing the motive force that a revolutionary party must develop in Spain at the present time. The normal governmental authorities still existed. The task of the workers was to set up alongside of them their own government. But it was necessary to go further. It was necessary to carry through the proletarian revolution against the socialist and Stalinist parties. Here the POUM has fulfilled the same task as the Bolsheviks in 1917... Thereby the legend which has it that the POUM was a partisan of the Popular Front is completely destroyed..." ("N.F.", Oct. 16, 1936, i.e., when the entrance of Nin into the government was known.)

"For our part, we did not in the least adopt a reproving attitude towards the entry of the POUM into the Catalan government, considering that the chances of a direct contact with the CNT-FAI would be more favorable if representatives of these organizations could in the government occupy one and the same position with those of the POUM."
("N.F.", Jan. 1, 1937.)

LETTER OF THE BUREAU FOR THE IV INTERNATIONAL TO THE REVOLUTIONARY
SOCIALIST PARTY OF BELGIUM

(This letter was printed in the Lutte Ouvriere)

Dear Comrades:

The PSR has just conducted an experiment which should teach not only its own militants a lesson but those of the whole International. Breaking with the policy of the Bolshevik-Leninists on a basic question, the PSR appealed to the workers of Brussels to vote for the capitalist and Catholic leader van Zeeland, President of the Belgian Cabinet, as against the Rexist leader Degrelle, a fascist and Catholic in the manner of Delfuss and Salazar.

In its press, before the April 11 election, the PSR presented the arguments of the adversaries and partisans of this disgraceful tactic. But later, during the election and after it, the floor was given only to the supporters of those voting for Zeeland. This position could not but lead to profound repercussions, not only in the ranks of our Belgian section, but also throughout the entire international workers' vanguard. That is why the Bureau for the IV International, which could not previously make you reverse your decisions, deems it necessary to write you this letter today.

1.-Let us examine the arguments of the majority of the PSR in the light of the results of the balloting. In your appeal of April 17 (in "La Lutte Ouvriere") you write:

"We still regret that, as a result of the political shifts of the POB and the Communist Party, the workers of the capital were obliged to vote for van Zeeland. But from the moment when the POB and the CP started the electoral battle there was no other tactic to follow, given the weaknesses of our young party, than that decided by our national conference of March 21: to vote for van Zeeland in order to defeat Degrelle."

In other words: since Vandervelde and Rolocom capitulate to van Zeeland... we will do the same.

There is nothing surprising in the fact that the POB and the CP seized the opportunity to form a bloc of workers' and capitalist votes. The POB is in the government, under the leadership of Leopold III and Van Zeeland. To respond to Van Zeeland's appeal cost it nothing. In Germany, this was called "the tactic of the lesser evil." The communists answered it by wrongly refusing any united front with the "social fascists"; and later they justified their complete capitulation

to Hitler by hiding behind the zigzags of the Social Democracy, which they denounced every day as more dangerous than fascism. In both cases they were wrong.

Today the Stalinists throw themselves into the arms of capitalist democracy with the same zest with which they previously denounced it. They supported Van Zeeland despite the insults which the latter hurled at them. They desire the formation of a "Belgian popular front," Belgian "neutrality," etc... For all these reasons, Van Zeeland realized the sacred union of the chief fractions of the petty bourgeoisie, of big capital, of the church and the working class. Dogrello was beaten not only because he won the hatred of the workers, but also because there were lined up against his propaganda important sections of large industrial capitalism (especially those which stand behind the Liberal Party), of the Franco-philic general staff, and of the church.

The balloting, which gave 280,000 votes to the spokesman of the throne, the altar and the banks against 69,000 for Dogrello, God's proxy, definitely showed that the working masses (at least in Brussels), and broad layers of the petty bourgeoisie, still conceived of defending their bread and liberty through the mirages of parliamentary democracy. Under those conditions, the duty of the revolutionary party was, and still is, evidently, to intervene in such a way as to clarify the program of the proletariat, and not to add to the confusion and "anti-fascist" swindle.

The majority replies that Rex is the Number One enemy and Van Zeeland only Number Two enemy. Even if we accept this nomenclature, it does not at all follow that it is necessary to support enemy Number Two against enemy Number One. That would mean only that enemy Number One can be beaten with means and tactics other than those to be used against Number Two.

As against Rex, the PSR recommended the organization of workers' militias and an offensive for the socialist program. How can one pass from this position to that of supporting Van Zeeland? To answer that this is the sentiment of the broadest masses can only falsify the question. The working masses are intoxicated with the spirit of the "popular front", which is in reality only the reincarnation of classic reformism in a period of gigantic social convulsions and the approach of the imperialist war.

Now the popular front is the subordination of the interests of the proletariat to those of the bourgeoisie, looking toward a prolongation, a survival, of the democratic parliamentary regime. Van Zeeland and the POB, like Blum and the Radicals, profit from this spirit which dominates the working class by keeping the fascist organizations respectful, while muzzling the working class and reinforcing the whole apparatus of state restraint (army, police, restriction of liberty of press, of association, etc.) Blum and Van Zeeland do not break away from this in- placable logic any more than Bruning and Dollfuss broke away from it. We characterize their orientation as Bonapartist. If this characterization is correct, nothing can justify support to the Bonapartist state against the advancing wing of fascism.

2.- You then cite Lenin in support of your "compromise." But there are compromises and compromises. Lenin and Bolshevism speak of class compromise, and not of capitulation. In every compromise, it is a question of a bargain. Give and take. And, to be accurate, of a bargain in which it is possible for one or the other party to gain or to hope to gain; otherwise it isn't worth while to speak of compromise.

It is clear that the Bolshevik-Leninists are ready, under certain conditions, to make compromises advantageous to the proletariat. Engels and Marx demonstrated this necessity to the Blanquists. Lenin reminded the Bolshevik Party of it on various occasions. In general, compromises for us are in the same category as bloes and coalitions with the centrist and reformist working class currents, or with certain groupings of the petty bourgeoisie.

But where is there a compromise in voting for Van Zeeland? There is none, only an attraction toward the dominant social-patriotic current.

3.-We think that, precisely because of the capitulation of the POB and the Stalinists, the PSR was duty bound to present a candidate against Degrelle. Running a candidate becomes in this case a question of program. It is fully evident that this means swimming against the current. But to swim against the current means also to prepare the way for the renaissance. It is not only in Belgium that the struggle against the sacred union demands enormous sacrifices from the vanguard. In France and Spain, our sections are placed in precisely the same situation.

This struggle against the current is all the more indispensable because the action against the Bolshevik-Leninists rests upon unexampled calumnies. Those vile liars and traitors to the proletariat who attack us as "Friends of Hitler" are themselves the friends of Van Zeeland, Leopold, the general staff, etc. The struggle against the calumnies requires parrying in full view of the masses. There is no question here of personal quarrels, but of the class struggle. "Trotskyism is the enemy!" That is the rallying cry of world reaction, which unites Stalin with capitalism. We hurl our defy at it. Capitulation did not save the lives of Zinoviev and Piatakov. Persecution of our partisans will not ameliorate by one iota the pitiful situation of the POB leadership, which seeks grace from the conciliators by declaring that "if it discovers Trotskyites it will drive them from its ranks." **It is elementary to add that your vote for Van Zeeland will not in the least prevent the Stalinist pogromists from redoubling their persecutions, calumnies and provocations against you.

4.- Certain of you point out that the forces of the PSR were insufficient to conduct the struggle in Brussels fruitfully. We also believe that a change of attitude is obviously necessary, that our forces must be strained for an enlarged propaganda among the masses, although we do not under-estimate the difficulties which will be encountered along this path. The PSR poses for itself propaganda tasks among the masses. These tasks cannot be well carried out if the organization continues to live an enclosed existence, without a definite plan of work, inclined to weigh the possibilities of the various tendencies which gravitate toward our periphery instead of constituting itself a living current, combative and with attractive power, which can become a subjective factor in the evolution of the proletariat. But these real weaknesses of your Brussels federation are no excuse for your grave mistake.

But, on the other hand, the Brussels federation would have had an excellent opportunity to reinforce itself considerably. That, too, is why we regret that the Brussels federation, spokesman for the independent ticket voluntarily renounced utilizing the majority, which it had acquired through a referendum throughout the party, to present this ticket, and thus take advantage of an extraordinary opportunity to emerge from its isolation. Supported by the results of the referendum, it could have begun the preparatory propaganda work, collecting the necessary 500 signatures, which would have permitted it to come into personal contact with many workers and to explain to them our slogans and our program. But on the contrary, the Brussels federation renounced all activity, thus preventing the national conference of the PSR from pronouncing itself on the basis of experience acquired in the preparatory work. It does not suffice to be correct, if by indecision and inactivity one encourages those who have wavered. What is important in the elections is not so much the vote itself as the work of preparation and propaganda leading up to it. To utilize the erroneous decision on the vote itself as a pretext for not doing any work is to founder in electoralism oneself.

5.- In this letter we want above all to place you on guard against the errors which can weigh heavily on the future of the party. Actually the errors committed can be corrected. But persistence on the present path would inevitably lead to grave consequences. Your errors may retain an episodic character. But the political arguments raised by the majority may lead the party toward a fatal political position. If tomorrow a "popular front" is also created in Belgium, which in its early stages will certainly be an adversary of Van Zeeland and Spaak, what would be the attitude of the partisans of "compromise-capitulations"? After a series of oscillations, the British ILP, the SAP, wound up by sinking into the

* Kneeling before Blum will not save Marceau Pivert from dishonorable ruin.

popular front. The POUM lies also in the orbit of this policy of ruin and treason. This danger would threaten the PSR if the ship is not resolutely turned about. That is what every Bolshevik-Leninist must have constantly in mind!

6.- To clarify this question completely, it is necessary to explain that the oscillations of the PSR on the Spanish question helped to lay the ground for your last decisions. Your paper, despite numerous international discussions, covered up and in a certain measure defended the worst mistakes of the PCUM. In this matter reticence avails little. The Lutte Ouvriere of Belgium tried to rehabilitate the criminal tactics of Nin-Gorkin. It presented the most ambiguous phrases and speeches of the POUM leaders as those of the "IV International tendency". And at the same time the editorial staff refused to publish the resolutions of the International Bureau on the Spanish question. Any political apprentice will understand that an erroneous attitude toward the movement of the working masses of Spain has led you into an error regarding the movement of the masses in Belgium.

7.- Your false evaluation of the Brussels election was made on the same day that your national conference, by a very slight majority, decided upon the creation of a new trade union center. This majority explained the veto for Van Zee-land by the non-revolutionary situation. At the same time it justified the trade union split by the revolutionary situation (strikes decided in the streets and factories, etc.) At bottom, these are two aspects of the same attitude. Trade union ultra-leftism is only the reverse side of so-called electoral compromise. Fortunately it is only in certain localities of Borinage that your slogan for the creation of new trade unions is being followed. This fact shows at the same time that your local perspective has carried you away (in the trade union question as in the electoral question) from the national and international interests of our movement.

We know that it is the reformist leaders who expel our best comrades from the unions, who provoke them, etc... But the unions gather together the mass of workers, and the appeal for the creation of a new union center, even if one baptizes it as unitarian, cannot be understood save as an acceptance of split, even as a provocation to split. International experience, in Germany, France, etc., has already settled this question. The organization of separate unions leads fatally to the crystallization of sectarian bureaucracies, electoral cliques, and breaks the united front of the proletariat. The struggle for unity within the united unions involves the struggle against sectarian bureaucracies, against electoral cliques, for the united front of the workers.

It is a struggle which demands sacrifices. But, as we have already written, it merges into the struggle against the bourgeois state apparatus, and it is already an apprenticeship for illegal action against the war and the sacred union. The PSR must throw off this tactic under pain of delivering a fatal blow to itself. In this case too, certain of your leaders have yielded to a local current # on every occasion, instead of striving to orient it, does not permit one to become a real proletarian guide.

We will not touch here on the organizational questions now under discussion in your party. The task of the International Bureau is to aid the PSR to surmount the present crisis. We therefore confine ourselves to pointing out some of the measures immediately necessary.

a) It is necessary to establish an open tribune on the problems under discussion, not only in the internal bulletin but in the Lutte Ouvriere and in Revolution. The press must be edited collectively. We ask that you publish this letter in the "UO." at the same time that you open the discussion tribune to all the members of the party.

b) When the discussion is sufficiently under way, it will be necessary to prepare a congress of the party, where the real majority of the party i.e., of the active members, will be able to get clear.

c) The trade union work must be followed day by day, and corrected on the basis of experience.

#to the detriment of the general interest of the proletariat. But to follow the current

In general it is not by abstract discussions but through experience in struggle that differences are smoothed out. The party cannot bow before local situations.

d) Every resignation must be condemned as a desertion. Collective experience permits errors to be corrected, and the road to success lies through collective experience.

e) It is necessary to revise the trade union tactics and to revise the estimate of POUMist policy in Spain; that is the road toward correction!

THE BUREAU FOR THE IV INTERNATIONAL