

# DISCUSSION BULLETIN

A-16

March, 1954

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### FIRST PRINCIPLES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST PABLOISM

Correspondence between  
James P. Cannon and Leslie Goonewardene

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Ceylon  
January 26, 1954

Dear Comrade Cannon,

I placed your letter of December 16 before the Politbureau and Central Committee of the party and this reply is in accordance with their instructions.

At the time your letter arrived here, the CC had already adopted a resolution regarding the publication of the "Letter to all Trotskyists" in the Militant of November 16. I enclose a copy of the resolution. It was forwarded by us to the IS on the December 22, 1953.

I would stress that this resolution was adopted only after prolonged discussion and the most earnest consideration because we could not doubt that the National Committee of the SWP would not have taken so grave a step except for the most deep-going considerations. Nevertheless, and after the further consideration we have given to the matter in the light of your enclosures, we see no reason to alter the position taken in our resolution.

It is also our considered opinion that the step taken by the New Zealand, British and Swiss majorities in setting up a Provisional Committee to summon a World Congress of the Fourth International is likely to be catastrophic to our movement as a whole. We understand the documents issued by this Provisional Committee to mean that they are working towards a separate and rival World Congress. If this should happen, the consequences are incalculable. It may well disable the world forces of Trotskyism decisively in a decisive period of world history.

However, we do not wish to leave these matters at the point of merely expressing our considered opinion about them to you. The situation itself is too grave for that. Besides, our long course of intimate collaboration, the deep respect and unqualified comradeship we have always had towards you and your colleagues, and the impression that our regard for the National Committee of the SWP is not wholly unreturned, persuade us to the belief that our directly addressing you on these matters may yet serve the purpose of preventing the permanent breach in World Trotskyism's forces which seems now to loom before us.

We address you on the footing that we have not yet taken a position on the political issues which have arisen. We have been awaiting sufficient material and have also to complete a full discussion before we take a position on those issues. But we address you also on the footing that the political differences which exist, however deep-going they may be, require first of all to be thrashed out within our movement and fought out at the coming World Congress.

May we appeal to you even at this stage to stay the course taken of attacking publicly the very motivation of the duly elected official World Centre of the International. May we also appeal to you to use your every effort and influence with those concerned to prevent them heading towards a separate Congress in rivalry and hostility to the officially planned Congress. May we appeal to you further to cooperate in making the officially planned World Congress as fully representative as possible of the various trends in our movement so that all

these trends can join together in discussion of all issues with a view to a considered and democratic decision. In particular, may we earnestly plead with you to persuade the New Zealand, British and Swiss majorities, and those associated with them elsewhere in the working of the Provisional Committee to come into the officially planned Congress and to fight the battle there, thus rendering a full-scale battle on those issues, with all sides drawn up in full force and array, possible at the official World Congress.

We would add that if there is any manner in which our good offices can serve in ensuring a single World Congress in which the entire forces of World Trotskyism will be represented, we would be only too happy to make ourselves available in that behalf. We believe that coming together for discussion and democratic decision in a single World Congress is the only way to ensure that those who have marched shoulder to shoulder to long and in such difficult circumstances shall continue to march shoulder to shoulder in order to take the fullest advantage of the new and unprecedented opportunities which are opening but on a world scale for Trotskyism, its programme, its ideas and its organizations. It seems to us from the latest communications of the IEC that it should be possible to arrange for representation at the Congress to be accorded to all Trotskyist tendencies which are ready to come in on the basis of willingness to accept the Congress decisions. May we therefore ask you what you have to say thereon and whether there is any manner in which we can assist to bring into the World Congress comrades and organizations whom the movement has so long held in the highest comradeship, to whom the movement owes so deep a debt, and whom the FI can ill afford to lose.

In respect of your inquiry about the Ceylon party, we fear that you have been misinformed about the relations with the IS of the group which split away. We enclose a statement released by us in regard to that matter, which is in the form of a reply to certain statements in La Verite.

As far as we know, the pro-Stalinist faction has gone out of the party completely. The party is united as never before, ideologically and organizationally; is getting again into fighting trim, is studying hard and working hard; and is in no mood to tolerate anything pro-Stalinist within its ranks, either open or covert. We are being assisted in our recovery from the faction fight and split by dissensions in both wings of local Stalinism, dissensions which have broken out into the open recently. I think we can say that, although we do not under-estimate the difficulties of the fight against Stalinism, we are confident of victory against them in the struggle for our continued leadership of the mass movement in Ceylon.

Yours fraternally,

Leslie Goonewardene  
Secretary

Los Angeles, Calif.  
February 23, 1954

Leslie Goonewardene  
Secretary, Lanka Sama Samaja Party  
Colombo, Ceylon

Dear Comrade Goonewardene:

This is in answer to your letter of January 26, concerning the crisis in our international movement, which we take as an offer to cooperate with the SWP in organizational measures looking toward its solution.

As far as we are able to judge, there is a sound basis for such cooperation in all fields. We study your press attentively, and do not see any serious differences between your line and ours on the most important questions of principle, as well as in their application in analysis and political action on the most important events of the day. The two parties speak the same language on the struggle of the workers and colonial peoples against imperialism and its war program; and also on the concrete struggle against Stalinism and the analysis of its policy, as it has unfolded in the events since the death of Stalin.

This political collaboration in developing the general external work of our international movement -- a collaboration long ago established in practice -- really ought to be extended to internal affairs. We take particular note of the statement in your letter that the Lanka Sama Samaja Party "is in no mood to tolerate anything pro-Stalinist within its ranks, either open or covert." This attitude coincides entirely with that of the leadership of the SWP in its own internal policy. But we cannot stop there. As internationalists, it is obligatory that we take the same attitude toward open or covert manifestations of Stalinist conciliationism in other parties, and in the international movement generally.

This is, in fact, the touchstone of internationalism in the present crisis.

Trotsky laid down this principle in the first formative period of our international movement. In a circular letter of that time (December 22, 1930) he wrote: "For a Marxist, internationalism consists, first of all, of the active participation of every section in the life of the other sections. Only under these conditions is there any sense in calling an International Conference later on." I cite this quotation as a "text" and introduction to the following explanation of our position.

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A realistic approach to the present crisis must take as its point of departure the recognition that the Fourth International is no longer a politically homogeneous organization. The issues of the factional struggle are matters of principle which put the Trotskyist movement squarely before the question: To be or not to be. The attempt to revise the accepted Trotskyist analysis of the nature of Stalinism and the Lenin-Trotsky theory of the party, and thereby in effect, to deprive the Trotskyist parties and the Fourth International

as a whole of any historical justification for independent existence, is at the bottom of the present crisis in our international movement. In connection with this as a highly important, although subordinate issue, matters of organizational principle -- not merely procedure, but principle -- are also involved.

There is no way to get around the fact that we are up against a revisionist tendency which extends from basic theory to political action and organizational practice. We have not imagined this tendency or invented it; we simply recognize the reality. We have become convinced of this reality only after the most thorough deliberation and consideration of the trend of the Pablo faction, as we have seen it manifested in its concrete actions as well as in its crafty theoretical formulations and omissions. We have declared open war on this tendency because we know that it can lead to nothing else but the destruction of our movement; and because we believe that silence on our part would be a betrayal of our highest duty: that is, our duty to the international movement.

The fight on national grounds in the SWP is already finished, and the victory of orthodox Trotskyism is definitive. The Pablo faction which threatened the existence of the SWP, has been isolated and reduced to a splinter of a splinter. The party is bounding forward with the development of its agitational struggle against the raging reaction in this country -- which in reality represents incipient fascism in its specific American form -- with firmly united ranks and high morale. If we continue to preoccupy ourselves with the struggle against Pabloism, it is not from national considerations, for such considerations no longer have any urgency.

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Our attention in the ideological struggle has shifted almost entirely to the international field. We are fighting now in fulfillment of the highest duty and obligation which we undertook when we came to Trotsky and the Russian Opposition 25 years ago. That is the obligation to put international considerations first of all and above all; to concern ourselves with the affairs of the international movement and its affiliated parties; help them in every way we can; to give them the benefit of our considered opinions, and to seek in return their advice and counsel in the solution of our own problems. International collaboration is the first principle of internationalism. We learned that from Trotsky. We believe it, and we are acting according to our belief.

Our international struggle against the new revisionism is not simply a literary affair of the leadership, or a section of the leadership. The party is constantly informed and consulted about every step we take; and the entire membership, in all branches and locals, are completely involved in the discussion. Our membership is experiencing in this international struggle, a new, rich period of ideological life, in preparation for future tests of our doctrine in action in the class struggle. Just as our party was created, in the first place, in the fires of a great ideological battle over international questions of major importance, so it is today being re-shaped and re-educated in another battle of the same order.

The new, young cadres of the party, who have been recruited in the course of our agitational work on elementary issues of the class struggle in this country, are being introduced to the great issues which unify our party with co-thinkers throughout the world. They are learning, in the course of this intense discussion, the indissoluble connection between the policy of the party on the simplest questions of the national struggle and the world program. We fervently hope that the membership of the other national Trotskyist parties -- not merely the leading staffs, but the entire rank and file of the organizations -- are being similarly informed and involved in the present international discussion. Only in that way will they re-learn and fully assimilate the full meaning of our doctrine, and emerge from the experience as real Trotskyists who have once again verified their doctrines in a test of struggle.

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We have set forth our opinions in the Letter of our 25th Anniversary Plenum to all Trotskyists throughout the world; in our criticism of the draft resolution on "The Rise and Decline of Stalinism" adopted by the same Plenum; and in numerous articles amplifying and concretizing the basic position outlined in these documents. More of the same will follow.

In the course of the open struggle we have already found basic agreement with a large majority of the oldest and the most tested cadres of Trotskyism on the international field. We expect to find agreement with all the real Trotskyists in the further course of the discussion, which is only now beginning to unfold in full scope.

Although not organizationally affiliated with the International Committee of the Fourth International set up by the French, British, Swiss and New Zealand sections -- since the legal right of international affiliation is denied to us by the Voorhis Law -- we are in full solidarity with this International Committee and fully support its stated aims, while retaining, naturally, the right to offer this committee suggestions as to its course.

The International Committee of the Fourth International, as we understand it, is the political and organizing center of the Trotskyist faction in the international movement. In this respect, it is similar in its function and aims to the International Left Opposition organized by Trotsky in his time. In another respect it is different. The International Left Opposition had to struggle as a small minority for the reform of an organization whose cadres were already in an advanced stage of degeneration. The International Committee of the Fourth International begins with the real relation of forces in its favor in a movement whose main cadres remain basically sound and revolutionary. Its stated objectives are not the "reform" of a movement which needs no reformation, but rather the reaffirmation of the accepted program and the removal of a usurping secretarial apparatus by administrative action.

Pablo and his personal circle have set themselves up as an autonomous, uncontrolled and irremovable body, standing above the living movement represented by the national sections and outside their control. Such a regime is, in general, acceptable only to those sections

without experience, definite opinions, self confidence or qualified leadership of their own, who implicitly regard "the International" as a substitute for real national parties, and look to Paris for instructions on all things great and small. Such a regime unflinchingly runs up against the opposition of those sections which have firm cadres and democratically selected leaders who do some thinking for themselves, and rightfully consider themselves a part of the international leadership, sharing in its rights as well as in its responsibilities. This has already happened, and could not fail to happen -- first in the French section, then in the Swiss, English, New Zealand and Chinese sections, and then in the SWP. The open revolt of the Iceland section is taking place right now. Others will follow.

The International Committee of the Fourth International is organizing the revolt against the revisionist usurpers. According to the accepted rules of democratic centralism this Committee has full right to exist and carry on its work without threats or reprisals designed to throttle the discussion which this committee is leading in the furtherance of its declared program. Factional organizations in national parties are "abnormal" manifestations, since every serious factional struggle entails the danger of a split. Nevertheless, our movement has never prohibited factions, for it has learned from the costly experience of the past that the cure is worse than the disease.

Even when the majority and minority in the SWP agreed upon a truce at the Plenum last May, the Plenum resolution specifically stated that the minority could maintain their faction if they wished to. It makes no sense to acknowledge this right in national parties and deny it on an international scale. Like the International Left Opposition, the initiating nucleus of our present movement, the International Committee exists and functions as a matter of right; and in my opinion, it should not and will not surrender this right under any threats or reprisals from any source whatever.

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I grant that the publication of the Open Letter of our 25th Anniversary Plenum and the formal constitution of the International Committee of the Fourth International were, as Comrade Peng, the International Representative of the Chinese section of the Fourth International, has described them, "extraordinary measures." But there was nothing "illegal" about them. As Peng also said, they were "revolutionary measures" imperatively dictated by an extraordinary situation.

This extraordinary situation consists in the fact -- and there is no getting away from it, for it strikes everyone in the eye -- that the personally-monopolized International Secretariat of Pablo has attempted, and is attempting, to impose upon the Fourth International a line of policy and political action not sanctioned by our program or by any Congress, and against the will of the great majority of the strongest Trotskyist cadres. The attempt of Pablo and his personal circle to impose this unauthorized policy, and to choke off a free discussion, by means of threats, expulsions, excommunications and other measures of Stalinist discipline, confronted

the orthodox "old Trotskyists" with inescapable alternatives: to capitulate or to fight.

But precisely because they are "old Trotskyists," precisely because they learned in Trotsky's school how to stand up for their "old program" under any and all circumstances, and to grant no one the right to proscribe it, they have decided to fight. In taking part in this fight with all our strength, we are simply remaining faithful to the tradition in which we were politically raised and educated.

We know that some international comrades, primarily those who lack the experience of the old struggles in which our movement was forged, have been caught in the trap of organizational fetishism promoted by a usurping minority. But the usurpers will not catch the SWP. We had to fight our way out of such a trap in the old Comintern and we know all about it. Our procedure has nothing to do with anarchism, arbitrariness or irresponsibility in organizational affairs. Quite the contrary. We are fighting with the highest sense of responsibility, by such means as are at our disposal, to prevent the prostitution of normal organizational formalities to the service of minority rule.

\* \* \*

In our theory and practice, organizational policy, important as it is in and of itself, flows from and is subordinate to principled positions and political aims. Without agreement on the latter, it is usually quite useless to count on consistent cooperation on the former. Political disagreement, of course, does not always necessarily exclude organizational compromises to maintain the normal functioning of the movement while disputed questions are under discussion, prior to a decision with the informed participation of the membership. As past experience shows, however, the efficacy and even the possibility of such organizational compromises are usually determined both by the extent of the differences and the good will of both sides.

Do the necessary conditions for such a compromise now prevail in the Fourth International? Or if, as we are convinced, they do not prevail, can they be imposed by the intervention of responsible organizations, such as yours, which have not yet taken a definitive position on the side of either of the contending factions? We are open to conviction on this point, and ready to consider any proposals put forward in good faith.

I feel obliged to state at the outset, however, that in my opinion the prospects for the success of your endeavor, in the given state of affairs, are not very good. At any rate, there should be no illusions of a quick solution by a single action. Realism must compel us to recognize, that as the result of a long chain of circumstances, the Fourth International stands on the brink of a definitive split. The most that could be realistically hoped for now is that a counter-process might be set into motion. Maneuvers along this line will do no good; but honest proposals, which conform to the realities of the situation, can count on our cooperation.

Our willingness to encourage any sincere effort in this direction even at this late hour, must also be taken together with the distinct

understanding that our political position cannot be compromised; and that the necessary discussion, now just at its beginning, cannot be summarily shut off or stifled by any administrative decisions on the part of anybody. Eventual decision by a Congress must come after the discussion, not before it.

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From an organizational standpoint, the situation, as we see it at present, is as follows: A factional struggle which concerns questions of political program and policy, as well as organizational conceptions and procedures, is in full swing throughout the international movement. This factional struggle has already resulted in formal splits in the French and British sections of the Fourth International and in the SWP. (I leave aside for the moment the split in the LSSP, which I will discuss separately.)

The Pablo faction, which found itself in the minority in each of the three national organizations above mentioned, deliberately provoked these splits in order to deprive the majorities of their legal rights, and is now working deliberately to make the split universal. In pursuit of this aim, this faction is resorting to arbitrary expulsions, excommunications, and removals of all opponents in order to establish a fake majority at a rump Congress.

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This formal international split, however, has not yet been fully consummated, and this brings us to the main point in your letter: Does the possibility still exist, as your letter states it, "of preventing the permanent breach." That depends not only on your party and ours, between whom there is neither the political ground nor the will for any serious conflict, to say nothing of a split, but also on the Pabloites. Their disposition, in turn, may possibly be regulated to a certain extent by the position which your party and others take in the next period.

The Pabloite faction at present lacks the forces and the support to effect a "disabling" split, that is, a split which would fatally disrupt the Fourth International and prepare the way for its dissolution, whatever their disposition may be in this regard. One has only to look at the line-up of forces to recognize that. Their projected "Fourth Congress," to be held without the participation of the majority of the strongest and most important sections, is a foredoomed fiasco, since these "expelled" sections are internationally organized and alert, and can neither be dispersed nor by-passed.

The consciousness of their weakness in this respect is undoubtedly responsible for the maneuverist policy of the Pablo faction toward different parties and different elements at the present stage of the struggle -- their brutal ultimatism toward those who have taken a firm political position against them, and their simultaneous offers of conciliation and compromise, both political and organizational, to those who have not yet announced a definite political position in the dispute.

This two-faced maneuverism with respect to your party is indicated by their special communications to you, to which your letter

makes reference. You state: "It seems to us from the latest communications of the IEC that it should be possible to arrange for representation at the Congress to be accorded to all Trotskyist tendencies which are ready to come in on the basis of willingness to accept the Congress decisions."

First of all, it must be recognized that this assurance to you is flatly contradicted by the published decisions of the recent rump plenum of the Pabloite IEC. These decisions specifically exclude from participation in their proposed rump Congress not only the French, British, Swiss and New Zealand sections, and all those who have expressed agreement with their declaration (which now includes the Chinese section and tomorrow will include Iceland), but also those who may express agreement with them in the future. Their assurance to you that, nevertheless, such "expelled" sections, and those who may agree with them in the future, may somehow be represented anyway can only be regarded as a ruse designed to deceive you as to their real program.

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You say: "May we therefore ask you what you have to say thereon and whether there is any manner in which we can assist to bring into the World Congress, comrades and organizations whom the movement has so long held in the highest comradeship, to whom the movement owes so deep a debt, and whom the Fourth International can ill afford to lose."

Although such an inquiry from the Pabloites, in view of their actions, could only be regarded as a ludicrous masquerade -- they want nothing better than to "lose" the "old Trotskyists" -- we have not the slightest doubt that you ask this question in good faith. I will answer in the same spirit, with complete frankness. The hour is late; but in my opinion, the present drift toward a definitive international split, signaled by the holding of separate Congresses, can possibly be arrested, and the definitive split prevented or delayed, on certain conditions.

It is obvious that the first prerequisite for a realistic consideration of your proposal is the unconditional cancellation of all the expulsions of genuine Trotskyist parties, beginning with the French, and the announced discontinuation of such procedures. As long as these expulsions stand formally on the books, there is no basis even to discuss the question of whether the expelled parties would participate in a common Congress with the Pabloites or not. Naturally, those concerned are not going to pay the slightest attention to their "expulsion." Neither, in my opinion, would any of them agree to appear at any Congress as convicts on parole, with special conditions attached to their participation.

These parties cannot feasibly participate in a Congress of an organization from which they have been expelled, or in which their rights are in any way infringed. And it likewise goes without saying that serious revolutionists will reject out of hand any proposal that they participate in any Congress that is rigged against them in advance, or on any other basis than that of equal rights and full representation according to the strength and importance of their organizations.

The "special condition" now being bruited about by Germain, in his capacity as attorney and "orthodox" front-man for Pablo, that the expelled sections be required to agree in advance "to accept the Congress decisions" is based on a historical precedent absurdly inapplicable in the present conflict.

This "special condition" was, in fact, devised by us in 1940 to close the doors of the Emergency Conference of the Fourth International to the Shachtmanites who had broken with the organization and betrayed its program. The Emergency Conference of 1940 had been called to put the formal seal of approval on the decisions already taken by the majority in defense of the program and the organization. The Shachtmanites simply wanted to use the Conference as a forum for another round of discussion without taking any responsibility for its decisions. The "special condition" was merely an answer to an obvious maneuver.

The present attempt to lay down the same condition to the sections united under the International Committee, has none of the justifications which prompted its first use 14 years ago. The expelled sections have neither betrayed the program nor split from the organization. They are not seeking access to a forum discussion, and have no desire to degrade a World Congress to that level. They are still members of the Fourth International and will continue to be such under all circumstances. What is required in their case is not an extension of the privilege of participating in a Congress of their own organization, with special conditions attached, but simply a restoration of their rights.

It has always been self-understood among Trotskyists that membership in their organizations presupposes an obligation on their part to respect its decisions honestly arrived at by a majority after a democratic discussion. The demand that they make special pledges in addition to such self-understood obligations, has to be brushed aside as an infantile insult, as well as a too-clever maneuver designed to deceive some members of our international movement who are not sufficiently acquainted with its practices and history.

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The second prerequisite, to prevent, or at least to delay, a definitive international split, is for the Pablo faction to cancel their announced decision to hold their congress at an early date. That could only be a congress of a faction. The holding of a congress by either side, at the present time, would only formalize the international split. A joint congress, prior to adequate discussion in the national sections, the clarification of all issues in dispute and the informed decisions of all sections upon them, could be expected to yield the same results.

As I understand it, the International Committee of the Fourth International has thus far confined itself to the organization of the forces of the orthodox Trotskyist faction in the development of the international discussion. It has not yet projected an international congress; and I believe it will refrain from doing so until the discussion is completed and all the sections -- not merely the leading

committees but the organizations as a whole -- have had adequate time and opportunity to study and discuss the questions in dispute and make their decisions.

The Pabloite IEC, on the contrary, has simultaneously announced the exclusion of all its opponents, including ten of the elected members of the International Executive Committee, and set a date for the holding of the "Fourth Congress." These cannot be recognized as anything but deliberate actions designed, first to split the movement and then to formalize the split by a so-called Congress. In order to prevent, or at least to delay, the definitive split, your first demand, therefore, should be for the postponement of this announced Congress of the Pabloite faction. The SWP, on its part, has already suggested to the International Committee of the Fourth International that it defer action on a formal Congress, and will repeat the suggestion once again.

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A World Congress, if it is to have any real meaning and binding force in the present situation, must be fairly organized after a free and democratic discussion in which all the sections have had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the issues in dispute, to take positions on them, and to instruct their delegates accordingly. The World Congress must be a congress of delegates representing organizations, who come prepared to make decisions, with the authority of these organizations behind them.

Can Pablo's personal IS, or his rump IEC, from which 40 percent of the elected members have already been excluded, be trusted to organize such a fair and democratic Congress? No, that is totally excluded. It would not be realistic to suggest such trust to the expelled sections. If the elementary rules of democratic organization had not been violated by the Pabloites in the first place, there would be no splits in the several parties today, and no talk or prospect of an international split. The expelled sections would certainly require guarantees.

In my opinion, the Trotskyist faction united in the International Committee would consider proposals for a common Congress as a serious project, and not as a mere maneuver, only after substantial proof of a radical change of organizational policy on the part of the Pablo faction. Mere talk about such a change wouldn't do a bit of good. The test is action, as suggested above. There would have to be guarantees; and they would have to begin at the top, where all the trouble started. If and when the tangle begins to unwind at the top, a gradual straightening out of the snarls at the bottom would naturally follow.

There are certain things about which one should not jest. A World Congress of the Fourth International is far too serious a matter to maneuver with. If we recognize that, and regard the Congress with all the seriousness and responsibility which it deserves, we must recognize that the time for another Congress has not yet come. Nobody can invent a formula to work a miracle. To put hopes in an early Congress to work the miracle, before the conditions for it have been prepared, would only lead to disillusionment. I feel obligated to tell you this frankly.

Nobody will doubt your sincerity and good will when you say: "we would add that if there is any manner in which our good offices can serve in ensuring a single World Congress in which the entire forces of world Trotskyism will be represented, we would be only too happy to make ourselves available in that behalf." If and when the time comes for a united Congress, after the conditions for it have been fully prepared in advance, your good offices can without doubt be an important factor in guaranteeing its representative, democratic character and, consequently, the authority of its decisions.

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You err, however, in bringing the question of the Congress into the foreground as the central question at the present time, and in expecting more than a Congress could possibly give under present conditions and at the present stage of the struggle. This exaggerated estimate of the potentialities of a Congress at the present time, is expressed in your letter as follows: "In particular, may we earnestly plead with you to persuade the New Zealand, British and Swiss majorities, and those associated with them elsewhere in the working of the Provisional Committee to come into the officially planned Congress and to fight the battle there, thus rendering a full-scale battle on these issues, with all sides drawn up in full force and array, possible at the official World Congress."

The SWP will most certainly act as you suggest, if and when preliminary conditions are established, such as to give a reasonable assurance that the projected Congress can be a democratically representative body. But the primary function of the Congress will be to put the official seal of formal approval on decisions already made by the participating organizations on the basis of full information and adequate discussion. More than that even a well-prepared and democratically organized Congress cannot give. And since these preliminary conditions for such a Congress are not yet established, any serious program designed to "serve the purpose of preventing the permanent breach in world Trotskyism's forces which seems now to loom before us" -- as you have expressed your purpose -- must begin with a demand that the Congress be postponed.

The conflict in the Fourth International will not and cannot be decided by debates at any projected Congress. It will be decided by the democratic action of the membership of the national sections after they have discussed the matter fully and made up their minds, and instructed their delegates accordingly. That's the way the Fourth International was created in the first place, and that's the way it will be re-created and rise again this time.

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In recent years the Pablo regime in the Fourth International has steadily cultivated a fetishistic conception of the powers and potentialities of congresses and committees which has no sanction in the long tradition of our movement. The Fourth International is not a Congress, or an International Executive Committee. Still less is it a subcommittee of the IEC known as the International Secretariat, or a subcommittee of the International Secretariat known as the

"IS Bureau." To put the matter bluntly, but all the more correctly, none of these bodies has any real significance except as representative bodies of the movement. When they fail to have this representative character, or lose it for one reason or another, they forfeit their powers and the right to speak and act in the name of the movement. That is the case right now with the Pabloite committee.

I know very well that such bluntly-expressed conceptions have been derided as a peculiar "American heresy." But there is nothing heretical about them at all. The movement of the Fourth International, from its inception, was built precisely around these conceptions; and every time attempts were made to depart from them they encountered the brusque repudiation of Trotsky himself. He would have nothing to do with the idea that a collection of individuals could get together in a Congress and settle everything.

All that we know about the real meaning of revolutionary internationalism was learned and re-learned in the school of Trotsky. It is necessary to return to this teaching once again. Whether we like it or not, the Fourth International is going through a crisis of reorganization, and we need a principle to steer by.

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No one could justly accuse Trotsky of underestimating the importance of formal international organization, committees, etc. In the first four years of his final exile -- from 1929 to 1933 -- he struggled consistently to give the Left Opposition a definite organizational form on an international scale. From the time of the Stalinist betrayal in Germany in 1933, his whole political activity was pointed toward the constitution of the Fourth International.

But he did not begin in either case with international conferences or congresses. He began with the work of preparing such gatherings beforehand, so that when they finally convened they would actually represent real organizations united on theoretical and political positions previously arrived at in free discussion. He was continuously plagued by conference fetishists with their proposals to unite the movement organizationally and settle questions which had not yet been settled beforehand. He would have nothing to do with such proposals.

Moreover, when serious differences arose within the ranks of the International Left Opposition, as they have arisen in our international movement today, his first reaction was never to rush through a conference or congress to decide the disputes there. Just the contrary. His unvarying response was to propose a postponement -- even of a conference already projected -- until the disputes had been clarified and a selection of forces had taken place in a previous discussion. I can give you numerous examples of that procedure.

When occasions arose -- as was the case more than once -- where elected committees failed to represent those who had appointed them, and departed from the program which they had been elected to defend, he promptly demanded the replacement of such bodies by others of a representative character. In the early days the International Secretariat was reorganized at least half a dozen times. The same thing was done with the International Executive Committee, in 1940.

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Perhaps it is not generally known in the International that in the 1940 struggle in the SWP, the Burnham-Shachtman minority was supported by the majority of the resident IEC of the Fourth International, at that time located in New York. (This was prior to the passing of the Voorhis Law.) Burnham and Shachtman, who had been elected as the representatives of the SWP at the Founding Congress in 1938, together with Johnson and Lebrun, from the British and Brazilian sections respectively, made up the majority. These gentlemen also referred to "the statutes" and pronounced themselves irremovable, despite the fact that they had abandoned the program of the Founding Congress on which they were elected and no longer represented the majority opinion. They still claimed the formal right to speak in the name of the Fourth International. But neither Trotsky nor the SWP would tolerate these pretensions.

The Convention of the SWP (April, 1940) paid no attention to the formalistic arguments, which were undoubtedly in their favor. The Convention declared Burnham's and Shachtman's mandates null and void and replaced them by others who had remained true to the program. In cooperation with Trotsky, and on his initiative, we then organized an Emergency Conference of the Fourth International, with only a handful of delegates from those sections which stood by the program and were able to attend, and set up a new International Executive Committee. The Shachtmanites and their supporters howled to high heaven against this revolutionary procedure. They invoked the statutes and claimed that they could be removed only by a World Congress which they, as a formal majority of the functioning IEC, would have the sole right to convene. Trotsky gave a contemptuous answer to these pretensions in the following words:

"As the French say, we must take war-time measures during a war. This means that we must adapt the leading body of the Fourth International to the real relationship of forces in our sections. There is more democracy in this than in the pretensions of the unremovable senators." (Emphasis added.) You can find this reference on Page 164 of In Defense of Marxism.

If one wishes to condemn the SWP for its undoubted violation of strict organizational formalities in the present crisis, he can strengthen his case by citing this proof that we acted rather irregularly in a similar situation once before. We would have to plead guilty to this indictment too. But at the same time, we would offer in our defense the fact -- which hardly anyone today would deny -- that the resolute action taken at that time on the initiative of Trotsky, rearranged the leadership of the Fourth International in accordance with the real relation of forces, saved the continuity of functioning of the Fourth International, and protected its program against the revisionists of that time. Our present action has the same purpose, and no other.

There is still another instance in the history of the Fourth International of a similar action to break through formalities in order to protect the program and assure the leadership in accordance with the real relation of forces. Once again, after Trotsky's death, when the IEC elected by the Emergency Conference in 1940, departed from the program and defaulted in the functions assigned to it by the

Conference, through the defection of Logan and the German retrogressionists (IKD), a new body was improvised to carry on the work until the Second Congress in 1948. This improvised body, consisting of the European Secretariat plus some additions, directed the international work without statutory authority from 1945 until the World Congress in 1948. The SWP supported this improvised committee, not because of its formal authority -- which, strictly speaking, it did not have -- but because of its orthodox stand against the revisionists of that time, a consideration which stood higher in our eyes.

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I don't believe that in any of the cases cited, did the defaulting committees so flagrantly violate the trust that had been given to them, or so grossly and bureaucratically abuse their official powers, as have Pablo and his personal circle. If the orthodox Trotskyists were to recognize organizational formalities as the highest law, and agree to govern themselves by the rules laid down by the usurpers, the wrong would have no remedy. The irremovable secretary could maintain himself in office until he finished his destructive work, and even be certified in this right by a Congress, by the simple expedient of expelling his opponents beforehand.

That is precisely what would have happened if the SWP had remained silent, and if the revolting sections of orthodox Trotskyists had not organized their struggle under the International Committee. It is a great mistake to separate the Open Letter of the SWP and the Declaration of the International Committee from their contextual circumstances. In the circumstances they were political actions of the highest order. They may be approved or condemned on that ground; but it only adds confusion, and aids those who profit by confusion, to judge them purely and simply by an organizational yardstick.

A crisis involving questions of program and policy has never yet been solved by putting organizational considerations first. The history of the movement is saturated with proofs of the relentless operation of this law of revolutionary politics. The case of Abern in the 1940 struggle comes immediately to mind as an illustration, carried out to its tragic denouement. But the most tragic illustration of all is that of the political oppositionists in the Russian Communist Party and the Comintern, who sought to outwit the Stalinists by submitting to their formal disciplinary rules. By that, they only facilitated the destructive work of the Stalinist revisionists; and the fetishists of formal discipline themselves, all of them without exception, ended up as wretched capitulators.

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I must tell you frankly that I think the LSSP entered on a dangerous path when it adopted its resolution condemning the publication of our Open Letter, in advance of taking a position on the political questions in dispute. Unless the LSSP radically changes the political line expounded in its press, it will be compelled to recognize -- and that in the very near future -- that its line is contrary to the line of the Pabloites and very near to, if not identical with, the line of the SWP. Meantime, your action gave objective political support to the Pabloites and counted more in their favor

than all the stereotyped resolutions of the Pabloite handraisers.

I have the definite impression that your action was motivated by the conception that the formal unity of the international movement is the most important consideration at the moment, and by your sincere desire to maintain this unity. If my impression is correct, your action contained a double error. Formal unity is not our first, nor even our second, principle; it is not the most important question in the present situation; and your action did not serve the cause of unity anyhow.

The first concern of Trotskyists always has been, and should be now, the defense of our doctrine. That is the first principle. The second principle, giving life to the first, is the protection of the historically-created cadres against any attempt to disrupt or disperse them. At the best, formal unity stands third in the order of importance.

The cadres of the "old Trotskyists" represent the accumulated capital of the long struggle. They are the carriers of the doctrine; the sole human instruments now available to bring our doctrine -- the element of socialist consciousness -- into the mass movement. The Pablo camarilla set out deliberately to disrupt these cadres, one by one, in one country after another. And we set out, no less deliberately -- after too long a delay -- to defend the cadres against this perfidious attack. Our sense of responsibility to the international movement imperatively required us to do so. Revolutionary cadres are not indestructible. The tragic experience of the Comintern taught us that.

\* \* \*

Have you read the account of the struggle in France in the Bulletin of the International Committee? That is something to make one's blood boil. The French Majority have stood up for two years against unimaginable bureaucratic injustices, manipulations and intrigues, and have shown their revolutionary calibre in the test of the French General Strike. But if they had been allowed to remain in isolation much longer, to fight alone without international connections or support, they could hardly have failed to suffer discouragement and demoralization. The first letter in the Trotskyist alphabet says that no national party can stand alone, and sustain a correct revolutionary policy in this epoch, without international collaboration and support.

The cadres of British Trotskyism, so painfully assembled in long years of experience, under the terrible handicap of inadequate and unworthy leadership for so long a time, were marked for attack in the summer of 1953. We saw this incredible operation develop step by step, like a series of irrational actions in a nightmare world. But it was all too real. The British section of the Fourth International would be a shambles today if the leading cadres had been abandoned, and left without international support against the treacherously deliberate campaign to disrupt them.

The letter which Comrade Peng addressed to me, published in the February, 1954 Discussion Bulletin of the SWP (No. A-15), is one of

the most devastating, and at the same time one of the most poignant, documents in the history of our movement. Here is a heroic section of the Fourth International, with 25 years of experience in a struggle which has cost them many victims. This cadre, by rights, should be estimated as one of the greatest treasures of our international movement, the pledge of its future in the Orient. Our Chinese cadre should by all means have been encouraged, nurtured and assisted in every comradely way.

Instead of that, we have seen them hounded, persecuted and derided as "fugitives from a revolution." The SWP leadership felt very deeply and bitterly about the abominable mistreatment of the Chinese comrades. We felt that we had kept silent about this scandal too long, especially after we learned that Peng's "Open Letter to Mao," and the "Appeal of the Five" against the murder of their comrades inside China, had been submitted to the International Secretariat last May and were never distributed to the national organizations. These documents, of such great political urgency and historical importance, were only published in October -- five months later -- when the Militant finally received copies by independent means.

Most alarming of all to us, were the repeated reports we had direct from Hong Kong that the cadre was stagnating without perspectives, feeling isolated and helpless in the international movement, and appealing to the SWP for aid. Peng's letter confirms the reports of the comrades in Hong Kong that the organization "was more and more approaching the edge of disintegration." He further states that since the publication of the SWP Letter, "they have recovered their original confidence." I consider this alone a sufficient justification of the actions which have been taken by the SWP and the International Committee to rally and unite the real cadres of international Trotskyism.

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The formal unity of the international movement is important. There is no doubt about that. But formal unity has no real meaning, and is not worth a cent, if it represents a fictitious legal form to cover the actual disintegration and demoralization of the old cadres. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

But even from the standpoint of preserving the formal unity of the international movement, your resolution had a contrary effect to that which you intended. The real Pabloites -- that is, the conscious revisionists and liquidators -- after all, don't represent very numerous forces. They are ready for any adventure, as we have already seen in France, England and the United States; but there is not much that they can do by themselves. Least of all could they take the road of a definitive international split at the present time. For that, they need the cover and support of orthodox elements and organizations whose support can be attracted on formal organization grounds and other considerations of a secondary order.

Germain, the only one of the Paris group who retains any standing among the orthodox Trotskyists, renders that service to them in Europe; and, unfortunately, his maneuvering is not entirely innocent. Your resolution, despite your intentions, had the same effect. It

emboldened the Pabloites to take further organizational measures of a disruptive character in the direction of a definitive international split. They would hardly have had the courage to take these actions if they had not been able to count on your support, as stated in your resolution.

To the extent that your resolution may have been designed to stop, or to slow down, a drive toward split from the other side, it was also misdirected. From the very start, the forces united in the International Committee did not set an international split as their goal. They were sure they could win a big majority in a fair, democratic discussion and saw no need of a split. But at the same time, they began with a resolute determination to fight without compromise to reinstate the basic program, and to stop the disruption of the cadres, and to permit no considerations of a secondary character to cut across this line of principle.

We have no reason to doubt that the real movement of world Trotskyism, represented by its cadres, will be united on this basis in any case, and that the revisionists will be isolated and rendered powerless to disrupt this unity. All doubts on this score will be settled when the orthodox Trotskyist national organizations decide to put first things first, and to align themselves in the factional struggle with those whom they agree with, or stand nearest to, on the most important questions.

Trotsky said many times that the real political position of any group or party is determined by its international alignments, even more than by its resolutions. Internationalism is the test and guiding line of every national group or party in the modern epoch. And the touchstone of internationalism is international alignment. So taught Trotsky.

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The SWP is in favor of the unity of all Trotskyists in one faction, as a stage on the road to the re-unification of the Fourth International, on two fundamental points, as stated in its Open Letter of its 25th Anniversary Plenum: The reaffirmation of the Orthodox Trotskyist program, and the recognition that the historically-created cadres are the human forces upon which we must build. The Trotskyist faction of the Fourth International does not require agreement on tactical questions or other questions of secondary order, including questions of procedure in the factional struggle. Differences on these questions are not only permissible and subject to discussion. Such differences cannot be prevented, and it would be stupid to proscribe them.

But in order to discuss such questions profitably, and to settle them either by agreement or majority vote, it is necessary first to establish the principled framework within which the proposals can be discussed, and to agree upon the aims they are designed to serve. Discipline is a problem of tenth-rate importance for real Trotskyists, and is taken as a matter of course, as long as the things which unite them are more important than the things which divide them. When this condition prevails, they advocate and observe an iron discipline. When this condition is lacking, the attempt to enforce conformity by

police measures becomes a horrible caricature of discipline, capable of producing nothing but splits. There is plenty of experience to convince us of that, and the Pablo regime has provided additional proof.

For the reasons given we have started our struggle to unite in one faction only those who are in principled agreement, and will continue along the same line, expecting and allowing for differences on tactical and organizational questions. The Pablo faction on the other hand, is attempting to gather up anybody and everybody, the orthodox and the revisionists, as well as those who don't recognize the differences, as long as they agree to certain organizational rules laid down by the Pablo faction, or interpreted by them as they see fit. The difference between the two factions, as far as methods are concerned, is the difference between principled politics and unprincipled combinationism.

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Since there are no discernible differences on the most important questions between us and the LSSP, we expect to find agreement with you for cooperation as members of the same faction. We do not see how this cooperation can be avoided. A decision to that effect by your party would virtually settle all doubts of the victory of orthodoxy in the internal struggle in the international movement. It would also operate powerfully to protect the formal unity of the movement in two ways: First, it would be a warning to the Pabloites that any adventure with a formal split would be doomed to destruction. Second, it would bring to bear the influence of your party for moderation, responsibility and restraint within the councils of the orthodox faction.

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Our comments on the pro-Stalinist split in the LSSP were not based on misinformation, as your letter suggests, but rather on deductions from the role played by Pablo in France, England and the United States, which we knew very well. We, like all the other parties in the international movement, were kept in the dark while the crisis in your party was unfolding. The first information we received about the full seriousness of the pro-Stalinist disruption in the LSSP was contained in press dispatches in the New York papers last October, on the eve of our 25th Anniversary Plenum. These dispatches told of a split at your Congress and reported that a third of the delegates had demanded uncritical recognition of the leadership of the Soviet bureaucracy before leaving the Congress. We also heard that the Silva group had quoted Pablo and Clarke at your Congress. Prior to that, we had heard only rumors of some kind of a pro-Stalinist tendency in your ranks and had assumed that it was an isolated group of no great importance.

We could not separate the developments in your party from similar manifestations in our own ranks, which had been cultivated and encouraged by the Pabloites from the beginning -- although they avoided any explicit pro-Stalinist formulations themselves, and conveniently disavowed their factional supporters in Seattle when they carried the Pabloite revelation to its logical conclusion and openly went over to the Stalinists.

We received no documents, no official information whatever, from the International Secretariat while the pro-Stalinist faction in the LSSP was building up its struggle toward the split. At the same time, Pablo tried to lull us to sleep, and to assure us that our apprehensions about the tendency toward Stalinist conciliationism in the SWP were unfounded, and contrary to the general trend in the international movement. He actually wrote to Manuel, under date of March 23, 1953:

"Since the Old Man's death up to now we have not had to deal in the world movement with pro-Stalinist tendencies (I don't speak of individuals here and there) who have capitulated or wanted to capitulate to Stalinism, but on the contrary with tendencies which have gravely erred in the opposite sense. . . It is there that the principal danger lies, and there is still the danger today against which we have effectively fought. All those who have quit us have not gone to the Stalinists but to the reaction and have become both anti-Stalinists and fierce anti-communists."

In the light of the actual situation in your party at that time -- which was known to him but unknown to us -- this statement can be considered as nothing but deliberate deception. I must say, to our credit, that we did not take this reassurance for good coin as far as the SWP was concerned. We campaigned against Stalinist conciliationism as an alien tendency in our ranks, and thereby protected the party from a disabling split on that issue. When the Seattle Pabloites openly went over to Stalinism, they gave the party members all the confirmation they needed of our warning and put an end to all possible further recruitment into the Pabloite faction in the SWP.

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The International Secretariat's letters disavowing the pro-Stalinist faction in the LSSP, after the latter had dispensed with hypocritical formulations and unfolded its real pro-Stalinist program, does not convince us that this faction was not instigated and encouraged, directly or indirectly, in the first place. It is simply inconceivable that 8 out of 17 members of your Central Committee, just one short of a majority, could submit a pro-Stalinist resolution unless a favorable atmosphere had been previously created in the international movement; and if it had not received some direct or indirect encouragement to begin the struggle.

It goes without saying, that no one can propose an unambiguous pro-Stalinist policy in any section of our movement, raised and educated in the doctrine of Trotskyism, with any hope of success. The Seattle Pabloites recognized this when they accompanied their open avowal of Stalinism with a formal withdrawal from the party. The Open Letter of the SWP stated correctly that Pablo's method is to introduce Stalinist conciliationism in graduated doses; to maneuver the movement in that direction step by step; and to accompany the maneuver with disruptive assaults on the orthodox Trotskyist cadres by instigating factional opposition.

That's the way the game was worked in France, then in the United States, and after that in England. Now we have the testimony of the Chinese that the same perfidious operation was attempted there by

offering the Chinese student in Paris the "support" of "our International" in a factional struggle to overthrow the Chinese leadership. (See the Letter of S.T. Peng in the SWP Discussion Bulletin No. A-15, February, 1954, Page 10.)

From our knowledge of Pablo's real intentions, as they have been revealed by his devious and treacherous maneuvers to disrupt the cadres in other parties, we came to the logical conclusion that he was playing the same game in the LSSP. And we still think that is the case. Moreover, the open defection of the Silva faction will not put an end to these maneuvers. It is not convenient for Pablo to engage in an open conflict with your leadership at the present moment. His hands are quite fully occupied, for the time being, with the revolt of other sections organized under the International Committee, and he badly needs the organizational support of the LSSP on any basis that it can be secured. But if he could succeed in breaking up the orthodox cadres in other parties, the LSSP could be the next easy target at any chosen time.

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In this letter I have placed your international obligations as of first importance in determining your policy in the present struggle. But this is not meant to suggest that you should sacrifice the interests of the LSSP to the higher interests of the international movement as a whole. In fact, the two cannot be separated. The future of the LSSP, as a Trotskyist organization, also depends on the victory of the Trotskyist faction in the international struggle.

The LSSP -- more than any other party, I venture to say -- requires an international leadership which will be a source of strength and support to its Trotskyist orthodoxy -- the sole condition for its survival and eventual victory -- rather than an organizing center of creeping liquidationism and disruption. If, as I strongly suspect, you have a secret Pablo faction in your midst, its present tactics in Ceylon, as in Iceland, will be to subordinate the political discussion and political issues to the single issue of organizational formality, until the international split is completed with your support.

The LSSP would then be the next place for the secret Pablo faction to come into the open with a disruptive attack against the leadership -- in the name of "our International." Such an eventuality cannot be averted by diplomatic maneuvers, but only by an action. The adoption of a firm position by the leadership on the issues of principle, and a corresponding alignment in the international factional struggle, would be the surest way to protect the unity of your party against future attacks.

Yours fraternally,

James P. Cannon

December 1953

LSSP BULLETIN

POLITBURO ARTICLE ON "LA VERITE" ARTICLE

(This statement was sent to the IS for circulation to the various sections.)

An article in the November 20-December 3 issue of La Verite, entitled "In Ceylon: Split in the Trotskyist Party," contains several statements on the role of the International Secretariat in relation to the internal crisis in our party culminating in the recent split of William Silva and others, which are untrue. We refer in particular to the following statements: (1) "The International Secretariat has guided the first steps of William Silva in the fight against the majority," and (2) "The leadership of the Ceylon Party was hampered, paralyzed, by the International Secretariat."

Far from this being the case, the role played by the IS in this matter was really the opposite, as can be judged by the following facts.

The first open manifestation of a pro-Stalinist tendency in the party took place after the grave setback suffered by the party in the general elections in May 1952. Eight of the 17 members of the Central Committee submitted a minority resolution to a Special Conference held in October 1952, taking the position that the aim of the Party in the General Elections should have been, not a "Samasamaja Government" but a "Democratic Government," and also maintaining that a close and comprehensive political agreement should be sought with the Communist Party of Ceylon (as distinct from a United Front on concrete issues which the CC advocated).

In a letter dated September 5, 1952 addressed to the delegates to the Special Conference of October and to all members of the LSSP the International Secretariat took a clear stand against the political positions of the minority. Declaring that "the results of the recent elections have posed pressing problems before the Party regarding its immediate and even its existence" and that the International "is now disturbed by the nature of the disagreements which are beginning to be manifested in the organization," the letter went on to state as follows:

"The victory of Mao Tse Tung, the rise of the New China in Asia, the comparative successes of the Stalinists in the recent elections in India, are stimulating the activity of the Ceylonese Stalinists and reinforcing their pressure on our movement as never before. Certain elements, both workers and others, including members of our own party who are inadequately educated politically, can interpret the events now unfolding in the world, and especially in Asia, as genuine victories for Stalinism and for its opportunist and People's Front Line. Some of them can begin to flirt with the Ceylonese Stalinists and with their policy, which is more and more oriented TOWARDS SUPPORTING ALL THE BOURGEOIS FORCES IN THE COUNTRY WHO WOULD LIKE TO APPEAR AS 'NEUTRALS' IN THE CONFLICT BETWEEN IMPERIALISM AND THE SOVIET UNION AND WHICH WILL PROMISE TO TRADE WITH CHINA AND THE USSR."

The letter strongly criticized the "Democratic Government" slogan of the minority and saw no reason for abandoning the slogan of "A

Workers and Peasants Samasamaja Government," and declared that it is by this means that "our party will acquire its own political and revolutionary features and physiognomy which will be differentiated both from the Stalinists and from any other 'Democratic,' 'progressive' party."

Recommending "an aggressive policy towards the Communist Party by proposing the United Front to it on each occasion, but on a programme of concrete action," the letter went on to point out that this "will facilitate the exposure of the real aims of the present policy of the Stalinist leadership in Ceylon, which are not directed toward a struggle for working class power against a Ceylonese bourgeoisie -- the principal direct exploiter of the Ceylonese masses and principal agents of White Imperialism but which are limited to a Utopian attempt at "neutralizing" the native bourgeoisie in the conflict between imperialism on one side and the Soviet Union and China on the other.

The CC minority replied to the above-mentioned IS Letter in October 1952. The IS wrote back in January 1953 declaring that the letter of the CC minority contained points "not only on which we continue to be in disagreement, but which seriously disturb us regarding your future political orientation." The IS declared the principal points of disagreement to be "slogan of a Workers and Peasants Government or a Democratic government, attitude towards the petty bourgeoisie and the manner of aligning oneself to it, the question of the United Front." The letter once again stressed that "we do not seek a permanent United Front (with the Stalinists) but one that is temporary, with limited and precise aims," and went on to declare that "Any attempt to create a Front on a much wider programme, and of a more permanent character is, in reality, in the present circumstances, a very grave mistake. Because such an attempt presupposes (or will make the masses think) that our programmatic and principled differences with the Stalinists are less important than before, that they are on the way to disappearing, and that the question of a unification with them is virtually open."

The letter also declared as follows: "You must understand that the Stalinists in Ceylon have, first of all, no other aim but our destruction. The interests of the masses, etc., etc., for them are things that only come afterwards."

"The pressure of Stalinism which, in your country does not have an important mass base, but which is encouraged by the victories in Asia, in China in particular, and now also very probably by our own weaknesses which it sees, our hesitations, and our differences, is for us, our Ceylonese Party, the most dangerous," and, "The workers and the elements who follow the Stalinists in Ceylon also naturally concern us: but the best way of influencing them is to draw them behind our party, by its dynamism, by being on the offensive in relation to their leadership, by the breadth and effectiveness of its day to day revolutionary activity."

Finally, a letter of the IEC to the members of the LSSP, dated May 15, 1953, declared that "under the pressure exercised all over Asia by Mao Tse Tung's China as well as that of the relative stagnation of the workers' struggle in Ceylon, liquidationist and even openly capitulationist tendencies in the face of Stalinism have been manifested

within the party." "Consciously, or unconsciously," the letter added, "these elements become the instruments within the party of the Ceylonese Stalinists as well as the group of Philip Gunawardene and that of Bandaranaike."

The letter constituted a scathing denunciation of the minority and called on the membership to "Defend your party against the defeatists and capitulationists," to "Isolate the defeatists and capitulationists," etc.

We trust that the above will make it clear to all sections of the Fourth International that the line taken by the split section led by William Silva was certainly not the line of the International Secretariat, as is claimed in the La Verite article under reference.

## 2. DECLARATION OF THE CC OF THE LSSP

The CC of the LSSP Ceylon Section of the FI, deploras the publication by the National Committee of the SWP in the Militant of November 16, 1953 of a public attack on the duly elected leadership of the FI. This action is all the more deplorable because preparations were already being made for the 4th World Congress of the FI, at which differences in the world Trotskyist movement could be resolved in the democratic manner which is a tradition of our movement.

This action is in fact a serious blow to all sections of the International. In Ceylon it has already provided a weapon to the enemies of the party; and that at a time when the party is just recovering from the effects of the recent split in its ranks.

The CC does not have as yet sufficient information to take up a position on the political questions in dispute. But it takes its stand uncompromisingly on the position that these questions should be resolved in accordance with the principles and methods of democratic centralism.

(This resolution, unanimously passed by the CC, was sent on December 22 to the IS for circulation to the various sections.)

## 3. EXPLANATORY STATEMENT BY THE POLITBUREAU ON THE DISPUTE IN THE INTERNATIONAL

An article appeared in the November 16 issue of the Militant, under the name of the National Committee of the SWP, which publicly attacked the IS, and Comrade Pablo, Secretary of the IS in particular. The principal allegations were as follows:

1. Conciliation to Stalinism.
2. Revision of Trotskyism.
3. Secret encouragement of the establishment of factional groups in national sections against the leaderships of these sections.
4. The overturn of the leadership of the majority in the French section.

The above article concluded by calling on these sections of the International to "remove Pablo and his agents from office."

The CC of the LSSP strongly felt that differences in the world Trotskyist movement should not be discussed before the public, but should be discussed and resolved internally, and this was the reason for the CC resolution of December 20. Earlier, the Politburo had issued a statement giving the facts on the role of the IS in our recent internal party struggle, since an article in La Verite had contained incorrect statements in this regard.

We are as yet unable to give a clear account of the dispute that has arisen in the International; but the following facts may help to provide a background to the internal struggle that is now proceeding.

1. For over a year there has been internal factional struggle in the SWP. The political issues in this struggle are not clear to us. In May 1953 this struggle was apparently "settled." But very soon it became clear that it had been settled only in name. In early November 1953 the leadership of the SWP suspended several leaders of the minority on the ground that they had organized a boycott of the party's anniversary celebrations rally. The minority members were called upon to make a declaration condemning the boycott. When they failed to do so, we understand that they too have been either suspended or expelled. The SWP leadership accuses the Secretary of the IS of having secretly encouraged the minority leaders. This is denied by the Secretary of the IS, who says that the IS did not take sides in the dispute in the SWP. Since the political issues were not clear.

2. In France, the majority of the party was against the decisions of the Third World Congress. The delegates of the majority voted against these decisions at the 3rd World Congress. After the World Congress, there was constant friction between the leadership of the French Party and the IS, the IS declaring that the French majority leadership was not prepared honestly to carry out the World Congress decision of entry into the CP of France. Finally, the IEC removed the majority leadership of the French party (led by Bleibtreau) from leadership. This led to the split-away of the French majority (which publishes the paper La Verite referred to above).

We have received the following documents which are relevant to the political dispute:

"Rise and Decline of Stalinism" (in English). This is an IS resolution for submission to the 4th World Congress, due to be held in the first half of 1954.

"Memorandum" on the above resolution (in English). This is a criticism of the resolution, received from America.

A criticism by Burns of the British Section of the above resolution.

The latest development of which we are aware, is as follows: A statement dated Paris, November 23, 1953 and signed by "Burns (for the British Section), Bleibtreau (for the French Section), Smith (for the New Zealand Section), and Jacques (for the Swiss Section)" expresses solidarity with the fundamental line of the Militant article of November 16, declares that it considers "the International Secretariat of Pabloist usurpers as deprived of its powers," that an "International Committee of the 4th International" composed of the above signatories

has been set up, and calls upon all sections of the 4th International to choose between "the revisionist and liquidationist centre of Pabloist usurpers and the International Committee of the 4th International."

A communique of the IS dated December 15, 1953 declares that "This 'Committee' represents an unprincipled alliance between politically heterogeneous elements with profoundly divergent views, who have been provisionally brought together by their common antagonisms to the current policy, structure and leadership of the 4th International." It calls upon all sections to "take a firm stand against the splitters," to "participate actively in the preparatory discussion for the 4th World Congress," and to "prepare to send representatives and numerically strong delegations to the Congress."

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