

April 18, 1966  
New York, N. Y.

To National Committee Members of the Majority

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed for your information, are copies of correspondence between Comrades Cannon and J. Hansen on some matters of international significance.

Comradely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ed Shaw".

Ed Shaw

Los Angeles, Calif.  
March 21, 1966

COPY  
SWP Secretariat

Joe Hansen  
New York

Dear Joe,

I was glad to hear of the discussion of the Cuban situation and the decision to send my letter and yours out to the Committee members. This is O.K. for a start.

But above all, we have to bear down on Indonesia. The terrible blow dealt to the colonial revolution, and therewith to the international socialist revolution by Stalinism in its present day Moscow-Peking version, has to be explained and hammered home again and again and again for the education of the new cadres. (Incidentally, the isolated Maoist tendency in the SWP will be obliterated far more effectively by this kind of a campaign of analysis and education than by any organizational or disciplinary moves.)

We should try to send our memory back to 1933 and remember how we trained and hardened our cadres, and recruited a whole new layer of other young militants, on the lessons of the German catastrophe. And prior to that, while the American C.P. was driving its activists at break-neck speed through the frenzy of the third period, we were holding forums and discussion meetings and printing material in our Militant on the lessons of the far-away Chinese Revolution--which the others had never heard of or wanted to forget. A lot of people regarded us as pedantic sectarians in those days. But it was through just these almost endless discussions and explications of seemingly remote problems--the far-away Russian problem in the first place--that we educated and trained the early cadres of our movement and prepared them for serious work in a broader arena when the objective situation opened up.

I understand that the next issue of the magazine is to be an oversized issue containing the resolutions of the world congress. I propose that we utilize this occasion to initiate and organize a thorough-going discussion in the party and youth branches on the meaning of internationalism, and our attitude toward the Fourth International, as the starting point of all our thinking and action, as was the case in the first days of our movement in this country.

From talks I have had with numerous comrades here, including members of the youth, I think this kind of organized internal discussion would get a warm response as an important part of our activism. I talked so emphatically on this theme to several of our leading youth comrades, with Oscar, the other day that the proposal came up spontaneously that I be slated to open up the forthcoming Southern California Youth Conference with a speech about the Fourth International and what it means to the youth today.

I have to be careful about committing myself to make more speeches--a proposal which always seems to arise whenever I bring up some political question in private conversation--but I do hope to do some writing on this theme, and also some other related subjects, in the next period if I can get the necessary secretarial help. But where the hell am I going to get it? Is there an extra Reba loose in New York?

Fraternally.

s/ James P. Cannon

P.S. I seem to be losing my self-discipline, letting myself fall into the habit of cursing and swearing, which the priest in Rosedale warned me could cost me a long hitch in purgatory. I slipped again last Saturday when I opened the Militant and found that Mandel's extensive treatment of the Indonesian catastrophe in World Outlook had not been reprinted with full display, dominating the center pages.

My curses were directed at you, because your name is still on the masthead as editor of the Militant and I blame you for everything I find fault with, even when you're in Europe. Even though Mandel repeats some things we have already said, he treats the whole question broadly and fundamentally and at greater length, and this is one subject we need some repetition on. Also, we need to give our readers evidence more and more that we are an international party and that we have competent collaborators in other parts of the world. I had better break off now before I start preaching--Hell-fire and Damnation.

COPY

March 30, 1966

Dear Jim,

It was good news to hear that you got yourself committed to giving a speech about the Fourth International and what it means to the youth today. I hope that in the question and answer period -- if you don't cover it in your main presentation -- you can give some of the specific details concerning the 1938 period and the years before on the difficulties of getting even those who were in ostensible programmatic agreement into a single organization governed by democratic centralism. It would be very timely in view of the efforts of Pablo, Healy and Posadas to picture the movement as suffering for "reformism," "degeneration," "opportunist betrayals," a sellout to the "Americans," and similar incurable ailments.

On Indonesia, the United Secretariat had been working on a statement. I knew this was in the mill but was not sure when it would become actually available although it was scheduled for March 20 or thereabouts. When I saw Mandel's article in La Gauche, I decided to translate it and put it in World Outlook. I thought it would be useful for all those interested in this subject pending the official statement. As for running it in The Militant, two disadvantages were involved. First, however closely Mandel may come to the line of the Fourth International, as editor of a left centrist newspaper, his opinions are not "official." (His own views on this are involved and it is necessary to respect them.) Secondly, a plausible argument could be put up against running both Mandel's article and an immediately following statement by the United Secretariat, since they would inevitably cover similar ground, and at some length. As between the two, there could be no question as to which to choose. Therefore I did not even raise the question of running Mandel's article, either in The Militant or the ISR.

We now have the statement by the United Secretariat and I am putting in what is for me the distasteful and rather thankless work of trying to get it into readable English. The statement could underline the direct responsibility of Peking in the Indonesian disaster more sharply, but despite this weakness it will serve for the time being.

It appears to me that the key to the international situation today is neither Cuba nor Indonesia despite their extreme importance. The key -- for the time being -- is Vietnam. Behind that situation stand such things as the decision of U.S. imperialism to step up its active counterrevolutionary

role against the entire colonial revolution and the workers states, especially China. And, on the other side -- Moscow's and Peking's weaknesses, inadequacies and policies of betrayal, which show up so glaringly in places like the Congo, Brazil, Indonesia and Vietnam.

Thus for us in the SWP there is one big difference between the thirties and today. Instead of being only indirectly involved in such events as those that occurred in Germany, we are directly involved. Aside from Cuba, the acid test for our party has been and continues to be its attitude and activities in relation to Vietnam. In this respect our presence has been felt in a decided way. I would say that due to this, along with the work of the world movement, Trotskyism is much more favorably placed than in the thirties to affect the course of big international events. Not the least of the reasons for this is the way the SWP was built and held together for so many years against the greatest difficulties. A straight line can be drawn from the international outlook inculcated in the American Trotskyist movement in the thirties and the degree, intensity and quality (programmatically) of its involvement in the anti-war movement today.

From this point of view it seems to me that the internal discussion that began around the role of the youth at the Washington conference really involved this whole problem of internationalism despite the unforeseen and accidental way in which it was precipitated. I thought your contribution in this was excellent in every respect. No doubt you intend to follow up on this in your projected speech at the youth conference.

In relation to the special issue of the ISR, as soon as it is off the press and is available to the branches, I think the plan is to conduct educations around the contents, as has always been the tradition in the party in connection with the resolutions of international gatherings of the movement. The customs established from the beginning in the SWP play the role in this instance of the statutes of the International which would apply if we could belong.

Fraternally,

s/ Joe