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January 19, 1973

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Political Committee  
Socialist Workers Party

Dear Comrades,

This letter is to inform you of the formation of a political tendency within the SWP for the purpose of participation in the discussions preceding and the deliberations of the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International. As co-thinkers of the Fourth International, precluded from membership by reactionary United States legislation, the SWP receives fraternal participatory rights and we request that similar rights be accorded our tendency so that the most comprehensive discussion may occur. It is not possible for this letter to present a full statement of our views; what follows is simply an outline of our basic orientation.

### I. The Transitional Program

Following the political leadership of the SWP, sections of the International, such as the LSA/LSO have begun a theoretical accommodation to reformism and an adaptation to a petty-bourgeois milieu. These departures from the historic lessons embodied in the Transitional Program are marked by the gradual ascension of a minimalist "democratic" program, especially in day-to-day practice, and concomitant with this, the substitution of a multi-class "sectoral" approach for a proletarian class outlook. While this opportunist movement stems in part from the isolation of the parties from the class, it has reached a point qualitatively wherein no tactical turn of these parties can correct the problem by itself.

The strong emphasis on democratic demands in the imperialist countries in place of a program stressing transitional demands and the allied uncritical stance toward bourgeois democratic movements in general taken by the SWP and its allies within the International, are based on a thoroughly incorrect understanding of the theory of combined revolution and its application to imperialist and colonial countries.

The root of this error is the fundamentally idealist notion that the spontaneous tendency of development of democratic movements is toward revolution. This represents a tragic and dangerous misunderstanding of the historical process of permanent revolution, especially in the colonial countries, and it leads to the party's abdication of its responsibility for intervening among the masses with a class line.

The SWP's idea that "consistent nationalism leads to socialism" when speaking of the oppressed nationalities within the United States, is one example of this conception. In the fight for the liberation of women, the SWP has adopted an overtly reformist position of restricting its propaganda to the simple reform of legalizing abortion. Again, the justification for this opportunism is that the struggle, in and of itself, will lead toward socialism.

Intermeshed with these theoretical deviations, the SWP has generated a "sectoral" analysis of social struggle. Replacing the program of the class with a series of "programs" for each sector, it seeks to mobilize these multi-class constituencies independently of each other and without relation to the class. This confuses the whole outlook of the Transitional Program.

The purpose of our program is to provide a system of demands leading to dual power and culminating in the seizure of state power. No social layer or class, other than the proletariat itself, and most decisively the industrial working class, contains the human material and social weight required for such an undertaking. While certain demands pertaining to the special needs of distinct oppressed groups and strata can and should be raised, to speak of a transitional program for any single oppressed group or social layer -- such as students -- creates deceptive illusions as to the objective conditions of class struggle and miseducates the ranks of the party.

The practical effects of this theorizing is the orienting of the party to these sectors instead of to the hard, serious work inside of the class. The youth orientation, which originated with the document, "The World-Wide Youth Radicalization", has become an excuse for an exclusive and self-perpetuating student orientation which has failed to relate to young workers, soldiers or to youth of the oppressed nationalities or to train new cadre for eventual implantation into the class.

## II. The Imperialist Countries

The paramount task for the sections in the advanced countries during the epoch of the death agony of capitalism is the breaking of the grip of Stalinism and Social Democracy over the working class. A strategic orientation toward the class must be a priority of sections within the imperialist countries. The aborted revolutions of France (1968) and Italy (1968-69) serve to confirm this view.

At the same time, these events call attention to a new phase of class struggle in the advanced countries caused by a sharpening of the economic and social contradictions of world imperialism and characterized by a rise in the combativity of the working class and a generalized subsidence in the scope and importance of the student movement. The ability of the European and English sections to effect impressive gains over the last several years by shifting their orientations to the class in line with these changes has placed the International at an historic crossroads. For the first time, the International has the realistic opportunity of breaking out of its isolation and emerging as a mass party of the working class. Hence, the success of the turn taken by these sections has immense import to the whole International.

The difference in the pace of the working class radicalization in North America should not obscure the fundamental similarity of the work confronting the SWP and the LSA/LSO to those confronting these other sections. The continuing abstention from work within the class by these parties can only lead to an inability to intervene in the proletariat in the battles ahead. A refusal by the SWP and the LSA/LSO to take advantage of the possibilities that open up to us in the coming period have the probability of plunging these parties back into decades more of isolation and thus may well result in an historic defeat for Trotskyism in North America.

## III. The Colonial Revolution

The perspectives for the colonial countries are generally set forth in the Transitional Program: the building of a Trotskyist vanguard and the mobilization of the working class and peasantry around both democratic and transitional demands toward the seizure of state power and the creation of a dictatorship of the proletariat. Today, numerous differences remain

within the International in terms of applying our theoretical program.

In the case of Palestine, the position adopted at the last convention of the SWP, that is, for a "democratic secular state in Palestine", stands in contrast to the correct slogan, "For a Unified Socialist Mid-East". This particular formulation of the SWP neglects the obvious need to point for a socialist solution to the Palestine struggle. Worse yet, to call for a "democratic secular state" without specifying its class character amounts to calling for the establishment of a bourgeois state. Such ambiguity is more than reminiscent of the two-stage theory of revolution of the Menshevik-Stalinists. At the same time the uncritical support to Al Fatah given by the SWP demonstrated an adaptation to the bourgeois democratic leadership of that national struggle.

The pattern to these errors is demonstrated in connection to the differences on Bangla Desh. While the SWP restricted its calls to the "self-determination of Bangla Desh," the United Secretariat correctly called for "Forward to the United Socialist Bengal" and "Forward Toward the Indian Sub-Continent Revolution." The mistakes of the SWP in this regard echo the political error mentioned earlier; the conception that democratic or nationalist struggles automatically develop into conscious revolutionary ones without intervention by the vanguard party. The fact is that while all bourgeois democratic tasks cannot be completed by the national bourgeoisie,

the national bourgeoisie is quite capable of taking the leadership of such movements away from the revolutionary class and seizing control of the state for its own class interests. This has been the most frequent historical variant. There is no substitute for the necessity of building Leninist parties capable of winning the leadership of the workers and poor peasants away from the national bourgeoisie and over to a socialist program.

In the case of Latin America, we cannot agree with either the stated position of the SWP or the International majority.

The position put forward by the SWP which advocates party building is poorly recommended both by the record of the SWP in the United States and by its sterile and mechanical nature. Intrinsic to the SWP's position is a transferring of their sectoral approach to Latin America, as their collaboration with the centrist PSA of Argentina shows.

We reject the positions of the International majority as well, but not for any pacifistic or legalistic reasons. We believe that the positions of the International majority, which envisage a continent-wide strategy of armed struggle, represent an adaptation to guerillaism.

The uneven social and economic development among the various Latin American countries does not necessarily preclude any continent-wide strategy. But at the same time to call for any strategy on continental scale before developing a clear concrete analysis and perspective of each of the Latin American sections and countries is to remain in the realm of impressionistic abstraction.

The policy of the majority is not based on the working class, but rather is a substitute for the class and hence is adventuristic. We wish to make it quite clear that ultimately armed struggle (as the adjunct of the mass mobilization of the workers and peasants) will be the only way for the revolutionary victory in Latin America. The lesson of the necessity of

arming the masses is one which must be driven home to counter the reformist influence of Stalinism and Social Democracy.

#### IV. The Workers States

The current discussion on China is of value chiefly in the adoption of a more correct analysis of the role of Stalinism and its Maoist and other national variants. The International majority evidenced in its positions a critical error in the consideration of Maoism as bureaucratic centrism. This position, if not corrected can only lead to illusions about other Stalinist leaderships which in turn could lead to projecting a course that would be detrimental to the building of the International. There is a certain tendency in this direction evident in some of the European sections' positions toward the leadership of the DRV/NLF and the Seven-Point Program.

The SWP while holding a substantially more correct position vis-a-vis Stalinism and correctly criticizing the Seven-Point Program, has demonstrated an unwillingness to build a movement of solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution and defense of the workers state of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

#### V. The Fourth International

We support the proposal for the rapid building of a genuinely democratic-centralist International within the framework of the Proposed Statutes published by the IMG. In this context we hold general agreement with the view put forward by comrades Krivine and Frank in their contribution to the discussion entitled, "Again, and Always, The Question of the International." On this point we must re-emphasize the necessity of the leaderships of the various sections and parties of practicing an extensive internal democracy and to provide for the rights of minorities to participate both in leadership and in international discussions.

We also wish to point out the harmful practices of the SWP: its lack of solidarity with the Argentine section when under repressive attack by the Lanusse regime, the refusal in its press to acknowledge that the ERP-PRT is the section of the Fourth International in Argentina, its interference in the internal affairs of the IMG. All of these exacerbate the current differences in the International and foment a factional atmosphere. This only makes the working out of a correct solution to current differences more difficult.

Comradely,

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John Luff (Houston)

Don Smoker (Chicago Branch)

cc: United Secretariat

International Majority Tendency.