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Internationalist Tendency of the Socialist Workers Party
c/o John Barzman and Bill Massey
Chicago, Illinois
October 17, 1974

To: National Committee, Socialist Workers Party

Dear Comrades,

On July 17, 1974, a letter signed by sixty-five members of the Socialist Workers Party who had been purged on July 5, 1974, was sent to the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party. The letter also spoke for party comrades who were purged without being named in Cde. Barnes' letter listing "known members of the Internationalist Tendency Party". Our July 17 letter demanded our immediate reintegration into the SWP. A statement by the Political Committee of the Internationalist Tendency of the Socialist Workers Party, which was appended to it, explained that this reintegration should take place on the basis of the "normal criteria for membership in the Fourth International, the SWP, and the YSA -- agreement with the general program of the F.I., acceptance of the discipline of the Fourth International, the SWP, and the YSA, and commitment to work as active militants in these organizations". Although this letter was submitted prior to the 15-day constitutional deadline for appealing disciplinary procedures, we have received no answer, or even acknowledgement that it was received.

The statement appended to our letter explained that until a decision of the United Secretariat had been made, we would continue to regard ourselves as disciplined members of the SWP. We stated: "a) we will not publicize our expulsion b) we will not discuss internal matters of the SWP or YSA with persons who are outside the Fourth International c) we will not intervene against the SWP or YSA in public forums or meetings d) in mass work, we will place ourselves under the discipline of the appropriate SWP or YSA fraction". Since that time, the United Secretariat has met and taken up the question of the expulsion of the Internationalist Tendency from the Socialist Workers Party. The expulsion was condemned as a bureaucratic act and the SWP was urged to immediately and collectively reintegrate the IT. Resolutions passed by the national leadership of numerous sections of the Fourth International have taken the same stand. In addition, the Internationalist Tendency's answer to the charges contained in the "Materials..." document have been made available to you at the United Secretariat and will be printed in a forthcoming International Information Bulletin. As you are aware, this answer contains a series of refutations of the accusations against the IT, acknowledgement of certain minor errors which were not subject to expulsion, and a recapitulation of our general view of the situation and the proper functioning of democratic centralism.

Since the meeting of the United Secretariat, we have received no word from you. In fact, the efforts which various comrades of the Internationalist Tendency have made to collaborate with

the SWP in its activities have met with hostile responses. For example, two comrades in Oakland, California, requested to sell the Militant. The branch organizer answered them that they would have to sign a statement saying that the "Internationalist Tendency Party" had split from the SWP, before they would be allowed to sell. In other instances, comrades who asked to collaborate with party fractions were summarily dismissed. It has become impossible for the comrades of the Internationalist Tendency to attempt to guess what the current national orientation of the party is toward the handling of any number of issues, or how the party branches have decided to prioritize such orientations in terms of allocation of forces to various areas of work and specific directives for intervention. Therefore, although we refuse to believe that the leadership of the party will persist in refusing our reintegration, and although we do not wish to become a public faction, in order to carry out our revolutionary duties in the mass movement we have been forced to devise applications of the general line of our movement to interventions, mass work, and the recruitment of new militants to Trotskyism, through our own limited means. This in no sense implies the setting up of a rival organization to the SWP, a rival press, or written public attacks on the present course of the SWP. It is merely the recognition that without all the rights of party membership, not all the responsibilities of party membership can be carried out. We sincerely hope that this undesirable situation will be resolved as rapidly as possible so that we can assume fully our responsibilities as party members.

In line with our stated desire to resolve the situation created by our expulsion as rapidly as possible, the Steering Committee of the Internationalist Tendency recently met and instructed us to explain to you our view of the situation. In our view, a step toward resolving the situation in the American Trotskyist movement by agreement of the two parties involved can be taken prior to the meeting of the International Executive Committee which is scheduled to take up the question in late December, 1974. We believe such a step would be a significant contribution to lessening the tensions which exist within the International. It is with this goal in mind that we send this letter. A common initiative on our part can only help the work of the International Control Commission and of the International Executive Committee.

We believed at the time of our expulsion and we still believe now that the differences between the Internationalist Tendency and the SWP majority do not warrant a split on a national scale, any more than the differences between the International Majority Tendency and the International Minority Faction warrant one on an international level. In our opinion, the single most important factor which led to the situation where the I.T. was purged from the SWP was the unduly factional and monolithic conception of internal party life and relations with the International which guided the actions of the SWP leadership. Such factional behavior by the leadership of the party was made possible by the ambiguity of the 1965 Organizational resolution. As you are aware, we believe that its interpretation of the Party Constitution and democratic centralism is grossly lopsided

in not indicating the rights of minorities, and in implying that all minorities rapidly become the toy of alien class pressures rather than positive contributors to the process of political clarification through ideological struggle. At present what must be established to insure a functional and lasting reintegration of the IT into the SWP is the willingness by both sides to abide by the norms of democratic centralism as defined by the founders of the international communist movement, and as enriched by the practice of our world movement. We think the following clarifications of the norms of democratic centralism must be accepted by all parties concerned:

1. The Rights of Tendencies and Factions to Hold Internal Discussions and Meetings

This is a right the ITF claims for itself but rejects for other tendencies and factions within the International and the SWP. We believe such a right must apply universally. It includes the right to hold faction meetings on both a local and national scale. It includes the right to internal literary discussion and communication within the faction, not merely oral discussion and personal correspondence. We reject the conception of the SWP leadership that minorities are automatically obliged to submit all such materials to the leadership for approval. Such a conception contradicts the very purpose of a faction; i.e. to be a separate, organized formation to conduct political struggle inside the revolutionary organization. We claim the same right of faction privacy for our faction that the ITF claims for itself. Finally we reject any conception that organized minorities have no right to exist except during pre-convention discussions.

2. Faction Structure and Leadership Bodies

We believe that factions have the right to elect executive bodies at the local and national level to lead the faction, to speak for it within the revolutionary organization and, where necessary, to determine faction policy between collective meetings and conferences. We accept the principle that the composition of such bodies should be announced to the SWP majority. We also believe that the faction has the right to hold delegated conferences at the national level. Given the numerical size and dispersion of our faction and the geographic reality of the United States, this is a basic precondition for our democratic functioning.

3. Representation on SWP leadership bodies

Representation of significant minorities on the leading bodies of the revolutionary organization is not a privilege. It is a right. In fact, it is one of the most elementary aspects of democratic centralism. We do not hold a rigid position on the question of proportional representation, but we think the denial of any representation on the National Committee to a minority of nearly 10 percent is inexcusable, particularly when this minority represents the views of the majority of the Fourth International. We realize that the present composition of the NC was determined by a convention and can only be changed by a convention. We propose as interim measures that members of the minority be named as ex officio members of the NC, to be formally

seated at all NC plenums with voice and that the SWP leadership at this time explicitly commit itself to recommend minority NC representation to the next SWP convention.

4. Finances

The financial policy of the SWP leadership is purely factional. The official finances of the SWP (which includes both LTF and non-LTF comrades) are used to finance factional activities of the LTF, both within the U.S. and abroad. At the same time, the SWP refuses to give any financial assistance to minorities (unlike most sections of the FI) and conducts a total financial boycott of the Fourth International. Until the SWP decides to give financial assistance to all significant tendencies and factions, we must have the right to finance our faction's activities. Inasmuch as none of us are independently wealthy, this inevitably means a much reduced financial contribution from our individual militants to the SWP.

5. NonFactional Recruitment

Membership in the world Trotskyist movement must be open to all those who agree with the basic program and adopted positions of the Fourth International. While faction members are obliged to avoid contravening the positions of the SWP majority on U.S. questions or other questions as yet unresolved by the F.I. in discussion with non-members of the F.I., they have every right to engage in contact work on the basis of the positions of the F.I. Militants who agree with those positions have every right to membership in the SWP. Specifically, those members of the Baltimore Marxist Group, the Revolutionary Marxist Collective (San Francisco) and the Socialist Union (Los Angeles), experienced militants who completely support the program of the F.I. and the decisions of the Tenth World Congress and who have applied for membership, must be immediately admitted.

6. Majority-Minority Collaboration Inside the SWP

In order to maximize the possibility of both factions working together to build the Trotskyist movement in the United States, in order to reduce tensions which are not directly related to differences over questions of political line, it is necessary for the SWP leadership to integrate minority comrades into all areas of work, not just organizational or administrative assignments. In the past, minority comrades have been largely excluded from anti-imperialist fractions, presentation of internal educationals and public forums, selection as candidates in the SWP's numerous election campaigns, etc. Minority comrades who are union members have not been permitted to develop union interventions under the direction of the SWP leadership. This discrimination has contributed to the development of incorrect attitudes among minority comrades in relation to the unity of American Trotskyists. In order for such attitudes to be corrected, it is necessary for the SWP leadership to make specific and concrete commitments to insert our faction into the SWP's political interventions and campaigns. The general model for the content and implementation of such commitments should be the recommendations in the report of the IMG fact-finding Commission.

7. The Norms of the Fourth International

The SWP's indiscipline, disrespect, and outright disloyalty in relation to the statutes and decisions of the Fourth International is notorious throughout our world movement. Our faction accepts the discipline of the SWP on all questions where the FI has not adopted clear positions. We do respect the right of the SWP leadership to determine the tactics for implementing specific decisions of the F.I. in the USA. We will not consider ourselves to be a separate organization if reintegrated. Therefore, even when the SWP refuses to implement decisions of the International to build specific actions or campaigns, or does so on a different political basis (as is usually the case) we will not seek to execute this implementation ourselves, but will struggle inside the SWP to insure that decisions of the International are respected. But on questions of program and political line, the authority of the Fourth International remains paramount. We will continue to support and advocate all adopted positions of the Fourth International, inside and outside the SWP, particularly in cases of issues such as: the Allende government and military coup in Chile, revolutionary strategy in Latin America and Europe; the nature of the detente; the peace accords in Vietnam; and the character of the French Union de la Gauche. Whenever the SWP violates the Statutes and presents publicly positions at odds with the line of the FI or its member sections in other countries, we will publicly disassociate ourselves from such actions and defend the line of the International. Until the SWP begins to fulfill its obligations to distribute Inprecores as an organ of the United Secretariat, we will continue to assume certain responsibilities in relation to its sales as well as those of publications from other sectors of the International. (We note here the precedent of the IMG Fact-Finding Commission recommendation that the British minority be given special responsibilities to distribute Intercontinental Press).

The above points of clarification are not a "special arrangement" to alleviate organizational problems. They are the basic norms of democratic centralism. They are universal criteria for the functioning of a Trotskyist organization (except under specific conditions such as clandestinity). Such criteria are common place in the vast majority of organizations of the F.I. They thus constitute part of the principled basis for membership in the American fraternal organization. The IEC should assign the International Control Commission or an ad hoc committee (on a parity basis, for instance) to supervise the implementation of these norms in the SWP, in order to really solve the crisis marked by the expulsion of the IT. If reintegrated, we will consider these clarifications to be our rights and will act accordingly. Otherwise it is impossible for us to assume our responsibilities as a minority: that is, our duty to help to build the SWP under the direction of its leading bodies; to accept majority rule; to avoid obstruction of the implementation of the majority line; and to contribute to the political clarification of the SWP and its adoption of a correct revolutionary Marxist orientation.

Comradely,
s/John Barzman

cc: United Secretariat, Inter-
national Control Commission,
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