

October 30, 1974

TO THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE

Dear Comrades,

The attached letter and document were sent by two members of the Internationalist Tendency to the address of the Kompass tendency in Germany. We do not have the Canadian RMG document referred to in the letter.

Comradely,

Barry

Russell Welch and  
Cheryl Clark  
Houston, Texas  
Sept. 3, 1974

Herbert Obenland  
Frankfurt, Germany

Dear Comrades:

As members of the Internationalist Tendency for the past two years we have become increasingly concerned over the IT's position on the nature of the SWP and our subsequent attitude toward it. Seeing the SWP as reformist, we think the only principled conclusion is an open, immediate political break with it, notwithstanding Comrade Germain's opportunist organizational maneuvers. We also think the IT has tended to rubber stamp IMT political positions in the past with little discussion internally, passively accepting their politics as a lesser evil to those of the SWP.

We are enclosing a document we have just submitted for adoption at the upcoming IT plenum. Also, we recently went through Winnipeg, Canada on a vacation and found some comrades in the RMG who we discovered to be in political agreement with ourselves. We are also enclosing a copy of their recent declaration of tendency which we intend to solidarize with and submit for consideration to the IT at its upcoming plenum. We would be anxious to hear any comments or observations you have on the documents.

Another problem we face in the IT is our lack of information on the actual practices of the European sections. They've always been held up as models to us, but we've never had access to any substantive information as to their actual political practice. Any information in this regard you think significant would be greatly appreciated.

Communist greetings,  
s/Russell Welch  
s/Cheryl Clark

Our attitude toward and our evaluation of the SWP has been a political question that has racked our tendency for over a year. A number of differing opinions have been expressed: the SWP is centrist; it's not quite centrist yet; the SWP is a right opportunist sect; it's not quite a right opportunist sect yet. These differences are quite serious, because they should, for principled Marxists determine our policy toward the SWP. But to date we have yet to undertake any serious attempts to resolve this question. The seriousness of this question has increased greatly in our relationship with the IMT, which has always had an incorrect analysis of the SWP, and has led to completely inadequate practical conclusions on their part for us and our relation to the SWP.

To date the debate has mostly been a tactical one, the point of departure has been how many recruits we can get and from where. This is insufficient. There are fundamental political issues at stake. If we are serious about winning the proletariat to Trotskyism we will not stand before them and tell them they must join an SWP that is rotten and reformist. We were wrong to think this in the past and it would be criminal to continue to function with this position.

If we purport to be Trotskyists we cannot tell workers, we cannot tell any politicized elements we are in political contact with, to join a party of betrayers. The SWP has not merely failed to carry out its revolutionary responsibilities in every arena it intervenes in, not just recently, but for a number of years. Its approach to work in the anti-war, women's and Black movements, its trade union work, work in CLUW, its election campaign, etc., reflects not tactical, secondary political differences, but fundamental political differences of a principled character in each arena. The SWP has functioned as shameless attorneys, defending every kind of bourgeois liberal and mainline trade union bureaucrat.

That Comrade Charles can come here and tell us, as the IMT's representative, that we should "recruit organizationally to the SWP, but politically to the IMT (or FI)" indicates major political disorientation on the part of the IMT itself, or worse, simple cynicism. There is but one correct political answer to the reformism of the SWP. To build a Trotskyist party in the U.S. it is necessary to counterpose ourselves politically and organizationally to the SWP, whose concrete politics are the antithesis of everything the Fourth International stood for under Trotsky. It is necessary to break completely from the SWP and break now. It might be argued that the SWP expelled us, we want to expose them and their organizational degeneration. In reality, this is a trivial point. The SWP's degeneration is also and primarily political. A complete political break is both politically justified and necessary.

It has been our (the authors) position for quite some time that the SWP is a reformist party. It constitutes a roadblock to the socialist revolution in this country. It is not a question

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of centrist confusion or of occasional opportunist deviations on the SWP's part. The politics of the SWP are consistently and fundamentally counter to those of the Transitional Program and the heritage of Leninism. The IMT leadership has long claimed ignorance of what the SWP's policies really are (even though it is their political responsibility at all times to know) -- we cannot. We have been implementing their reformist policies for years. We will cite just a few examples.

For many years the SWP pursued a class-collaborationist policy in its anti-war work. This was not primarily because of Vance Hartke's presence in NPAC, though this was indicative. In the earlier days of the movement the SWP toyed around with a bloc around "Peace Now," they went through a "Bring the Boys Home" phase. Their call to bring the troops from Vietnam to enforce law and order in Mississippi was despicable as was their publicizing of the slogan "Bring our Black GI's Back Home."

It's been said many times in our tendency that there were two tasks for revolutionaries on the Vietnam question: 1) to build a mass anti-war movement; and 2) build a left wing within this movement. It's been further stated that the SWP did an admirable job in one respect and failed dismally in the other; then somehow we conclude since they carried out one they can't be so bad. This approach is wrong comrades, terribly wrong. What were the politics of this mass anti-war movement? They were bourgeois pacifism and bourgeois defeatism.

The two cannot be separated. On what basis do we build the anti-war movement, except upon the same basis that we would build the left-wing -- upon class struggle politics? How do we put the mass movement together, to have something in which to build our left-wing? Do we have demands for the movement and separate demands for a left-wing?

The demand of "Out Now," outside the context of a revolutionary program, was easily twisted in the hands of the "dove" bourgeoisie. The SWP lent itself to this end. It's often been said that "Out Now" was a principled demand. That is true in the abstract, but that's not how we approach the question. There are instances where the demand for a constituent assembly will be a principled demand. But if a party in a revolutionary situation in a colonial country raised this "principled" demand and failed to raise all the other demands flowing from the concrete situation we would hardly praise their actions as exemplary. They would be betrayers despite their raising of one isolated "principled" demand.

The SWP blocked with any and all and raised no politics. This wasn't just a mistake of a secondary nature. It was a conscious political act on their part, they raised no politics precisely to create such a bloc. This is where their class collaboration really came out. Because NPAC openly sought an on-going class bloc with the bourgeoisie on its terms it lent itself to the subversion of the anti-war movement. This is why the ruling class by pulling American troops out of Vietnam could completely undercut the mass anti-war movement. Yet American

imperialism's counterrevolutionary struggle against the Vietnam revolution has not ceased and the question of the Vietnamese revolution retains all its significance for revolutionaries today, even if the SWP's "defense" of the revolution has ceased.

If we have learned anything from Lenin and Trotsky, it is that every struggle must be linked to the general struggle of the proletariat for power. Every struggle must be used to raise the consciousness of the participants of the true nature of class society and the necessary road forward, led by the working class and its vanguard; because the reformists will use every struggle to triumph with their line. A left-wing is merely an embryonic base to reach out to win with our politics, to fight against other tendencies, to broaden itself, and vie with the reformists for leadership of the movement, on the basis of a revolutionary program.

The SWP's work in WONAAC was no different. At one time the SWP stood for free abortion on demand. But their program had to be lowered in order to bloc with NOW and Congresswoman Bella Abzug. The point here is not that you cannot march with bourgeois liberals to obtain a democratic demand but that the SWP chose their issue precisely to obtain this bloc.

On the abortion question this amounted to betrayal on the SWP's part. The heart of the abortion question focused around the working women and women of the ghetto subject to the butchery of illegal, back-alley abortions. The "democratic right" to abortion has little content for them. Only the demand for "Free Abortion on Demand" had any relevance to the vast majority of women the abortion issue affects.

At the national CLUW conference in Chicago the SWP did nothing about the rotten compromise arranged by the union bureaucrats to keep the conference from backing the Farmworkers. In Houston we've been following a series of sellouts in CLUW by Debby Leonard on a nurses struggle at Jefferson Davis Hospital. A resolution calling for rehiring the nurses was tabled to a committee set up by Leonard, composed of herself, 2 AFSCME bureaucrats and 2 independents, to be approved without being subject to rank-and-file approval and this most elementary demand ("rehire the nurses") was deleted, on objections from the AFSCME leadership. We could cite numerous other examples of the SWP's treachery in their Black work, trade union work, election campaigns, etc.

It's often said, "Well, their day to day politics may be lousy, but on paper that are still for revolution." What are the SWP's politics if they are not what they call on the workers to do in the class struggle? These are not just practical mistakes, divergences from their program, in each case they have been theorized by the SWP and flow from their political analysis.

It's been said that the SWP still defends revolutionaries around the world. But what kind of defense? They vehemently opposed any attempts to raise slogans that would have taken sides in the civil war in Vietnam within NPAC, they refused to raise

any such slogans themselves. Another good example is their defense of the ERP-PRT and more recently the Spanish section. Their "defense" was to publicly denounce them. How did the SWP defend the Internationalist Tendency from attacks in the bourgeois media? Can we expect better in the future? And what of their "exemplary" defense of the MIR in Chile.

Some comrades feel that as long as the SWP continues to talk about Trotskyism you can't say they're reformist; it has not yet met a definitive test. This is ridiculous, the SWP is not a mass party; its opportunities for real betrayals are limited. If it occasionally exhibits what appears to be centrist traits it is only because it has yet to find the final vehicle for its betrayals. Occasionally it may be able to come off sounding very left in the abstract on some questions but only because it has nothing going for it in the particular arena. On the evidence, it is only because it does not constitute enough of a force for the bourgeoisie to worry about that prevents it from betrayals such as entering into popular fronts. The idea that the SWP has not yet met a definitive test was introduced by Comrade Langston at the December 1973 IT national steering committee meeting. It was totally rejected by the leadership then and rightly so. Yet when the IMT's representative in June imposed this incorrect idea on us we all passively accepted it.

The IMT's perspectives for the IT raises real questions about its motives. Comrade Charles says the SWP is "revolutionary with right deviations." It is quite clear that this is the IMT's analysis. Yet at the same time they "have no illusions about the SWP leadership being reformable." Further, most of the ranks are not reformable. This is a very obvious contradiction to anyone with any basic understanding of Trotskyism. If the SWP is "revolutionary with right deviations," then we should view it as our party, further we should really believe that we can win this party over. The truth is the SWP is reformist; a complete political break is a clearcut necessity.

We are caught up in a game on an international scale and as things stand, we are only passive, observer-victims. Before the May conference it was often said and the opinion was overwhelmingly held that a long term perspective within the SWP would mean our destruction. That was our political evaluation. Yet when Comrade Charles came and gave us the IMT's incorrect perspective for us we capitulated.

The four-point motion introduced by the comrades from D.C. at the May conference and which passed overwhelmingly was somewhat diluted by our leadership shortly afterward and the whole sense, the whole spirit behind the motion at the Conference, which was to take a hard stance on the question of our perspectives was lost. We chose to be "diplomatic." But diplomacy does not solve political problems. When our leaders accompanied Comrade Charles on his national tour of the IT a couple of weeks later, they did not represent the position we had taken at the conference, they were there to reinforce the IMT's position.

We were saved from our death then, not by our own doing, nor by the IMT, but by the SWP, through our expulsion.

We've known for some time Comrade Germaine's perspectives for us. Sell INPRECORs and do nothing else while a control commission spends months investigating and the USEC tries to pressure Barnes into taking us back. We have all generally agreed this will destroy us. At the recent expanded PC meeting (all but 6 members of the national steering committee were present) the position taken was that come hell or high water we will become an independent organization. But the PC has since taken a position that opens the door for our capitulation to the IMT once more.

A recent letter from Comrade Charles to the IT called our response to the SWP's split document remiss and weak. Further, we should admit and self-criticize ourselves for:

- 1) being too highly structured
- 2) being too forward on the May 11th actions (The IMT denies any responsibility for the distribution of the USEC statement on Chile)
- 3) not telling the SWP we were dealing with outside groups
- 4) not long ago declaring ourselves a faction

These charges are unbelievable! The IMT has politically condoned all these actions and when the question of a faction was posed to the International Majority Tendency, they opposed the idea. The PC met and voted to accept the essence of Charles' letter before our representatives went to Europe. This is in sharp contrast to the position taken at the expanded PC meeting.

It's often been said the IMT does not know the truth about the SWP. How many plane trips do Comrades Massey and Barzman have to make to Europe to explain? Comrade Charles' comments in June (political line didn't count in France in '68, what counted was apparatus and in the U.S. the SWP has the apparatus) clearly indicates the IMT wants to keep the SWP in the USEC, for its apparatus, to preserve the unity of the Fourth International. Why is it the IMT continues to subordinate fundamental political questions to organizational "unity"? If the IT goes down the drain, so what! If we're dedicated revolutionists, we'll take it all in stride. The IMT's attitude can be summed up very clearly as better more, but worse.

The IMT position is that:

- 1) a working class radicalization will go through the SWP, therefore, that is where the IT belongs
- 2) if there is not a working class radicalization in the foreseeable future, then the problem is one of preserving Trotskyist cadres and the SWP is the most viable place for this.

This approach is totally incorrect. They seek unity through diplomacy, politics be damned. Diplomacy will not solve the political problems.

Our differences with the IMT at this point can not be called organizational. They are very clearly political. The key difference being on our analysis of the SWP. Our own political position on this in the past has reflected our diplomatic relations with the IMT (which have been somewhat analogous to those

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of the IMT with Barnes) more than political reality. We must take the correct position on the nature of the SWP; that it is a reformist party, a roadblock in the path to socialist revolution. We must split openly, publicly, completely with the SWP. That is the only correct political conclusion. We do not want to imply that there is a common political outlook between ourselves and the Jebrac or Ali groups in the FCR and IMG respectively, we do not agree with their basic strategy. But we wholeheartedly agree with them that a revolutionary international can not include the SWP! That is the political reality. We must split now, immediately and put the political onus on the IMT to act as principled Trotskyist internationalists!