

November 14, 1974

To all National Committee Members

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is a copy of a mailing that was sent out to the Leninist Trotskyist Faction Steering Committee. This is for the information of members of the national committee. Please do not circulate this material at this time.

Comradely,

Jack Barnes

Jack Barnes

November 13, 1974

To the Steering Committee of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is an exchange of correspondence between myself and two LTF members in the Lower Manhattan Branch of the Socialist Workers Party, dealing with the general political course of the faction.

Also enclosed is a copy of the motion adopted by the Central Committee of the FCR in France concerning the SWP Political Committee's call for a special world congress.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice Waters

November 11, 1974

Dave Keil
Bill Gottlieb
New York

Dear Comrades,

First I want to apologize for the long delay in answering your letters of May 1 and August 6. I am sorry that other tasks which took priority postponed a response to the important issues you raise.

In rereading your letters carefully, I believe the differences you expressed with the course being followed by the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction fall under five points:

1. The character of the International Majority Tendency's political line.
2. The assessment of the perspectives before the Fourth International.
3. The evaluation of the agreement reached at the world congress on measures to maintain the unity of the Fourth International.
4. The program of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction.
5. The structure, organization and functioning of the LTF.

I would like to take them up in that order.

1. In your letter of May 1 you state that in your opinion "the present majority faction is based on a full political program which, in its every aspect, is irreconcilable with the program of Marxism." (your emphasis)

I think this evaluation of the IMT line is incorrect. It is also quite different from the evaluation contained in the documents on which the LTF stands.

Since the 1969 world congress those of us who opposed the turn to the guerrilla warfare line have repeatedly pointed out that the IEC majority's positions reflected an adaptation to ultraleftism. We insisted on the fact that their adaptation to Guevarism was reinforced by their tendency to bend to the ultraleft pressures prevalent in the radical student milieu from which the overwhelming majority of new recruits to Trotskyism have come. We emphasized that this adaptation -- unless corrected -- would have grave consequences affecting every area of work and eventually the program of the international.

This process reached its most advanced point to date at the 1974 world congress where -- despite a five-year political campaign on our part and extensive experience especially in Bolivia and Argentina -- the majority leadership of the Fourth Interna-

2.

tional plunged even deeper. They adopted a resolution revising the program of the Fourth International on a very important point -- the question of how the workers will arm themselves.

In his report to the New York Caucus of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction on March 12, 1974, Joe Hansen put this very clearly. He stated: "The adoption of this line means that a new stage in the history of the Fourth International has been opened. A key point of program -- the position of the Fourth International opposing 'minority violence' in both theory and practice -- has been revised." (Internal Information Bulletin, No. 4 in 1974, p. 6)

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From the beginning we have pointed to the fact that there was a methodological difference, a gap between theory and practice that is reflected above all in party-building. We said that their adaptation to guerrillaism reflected a departure from the Leninist concept of party building summarized by Trotsky in the founding program of the Fourth International. We pointed out that this methodological difference was reflected in disagreements on a number of important political questions ranging from the role and nature of Stalinism to the construction of Marxist youth organizations.

For example, in the Santiago "Declaration of the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency" we stated:

"On the broadest analyses made by our movement of the world situation as a whole over the past decade, both sides have found themselves in agreement in the main (with some significant differences in particular sectors and on particular issues). Yet a growing disparity has appeared in the conclusions the two sides have drawn on how the Fourth International should orient itself in certain concrete situations of key importance (Argentina, Britain, Spain, for instance). That is, in general, mounting differences have developed over how the International should handle its own forces concretely so as to expand and strengthen them organizationally and ideologically, exert the greatest possible influence in the class struggle, and advance the cause of the socialist revolution most effectively.

"To explain and account for this growing gap between the broad analyses of world trends and the conclusions to be drawn from them in practice in party building is now of crucial importance. Two major tendencies have crystallized in the Fourth International. They stand in opposition on a series of important questions. It is evident from this that one of them must have departed from the methods advanced by Lenin in his works and practice and summarized by Trotsky in the Transitional Program. Such a departure cannot help but more and more deeply affect the concrete political assessments made by the tendency at fault, thus opening the way to political deviations of either an ultra-left or opportunist nature or a combination of both. Differences as fundamental as this must be brought out so that the proper rectification can be made.

"It is the existence of conflicting concepts on the meth-

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odological level (which includes party-building methods) that explains not only the development of opposing positions on the guerrilla orientation, but to a large degree the development of differences of varying sharpness on various other important questions, such as the nature and role of the Maoist variety of Stalinism, party-building orientation not only for the sections in Latin America and Europe but elsewhere, construction of Marxist youth organizations, the historical balance sheet on 'entryism sui generis,' policies in the antiwar movement, and now the assessment of the Vietnam agreement and the nature and role of Stalinism in Vietnam." (IIDB Vol, X, No. 3, pp. 3-4)

We have viewed the evolution of the majority faction as a process, not a finished product. There is a contradiction between their declared adherence to the program and traditions of the Trotskyist movement and the political course they are currently embarked upon. This will become more and more evident. What divisions will occur within the IMT as some pull back from the full implication and logic of their positions? Which forces within the IMT will drive ahead to a broader and clearer break from the revolutionary Marxist program on an increasing number of questions? That will be determined by many factors including the development of the class struggle itself, and how we conduct ourselves in the internal struggle for political clarification within the Fourth International.

The LTF's purpose has always been to halt this drift away from Trotskyism, to reverse it. We want to force those who are breaking from Marxist positions on key questions to do so openly and clearly, thus exposing the logic of their position to those who are not ready to follow that course to the end and who would break from it if they could see this logic clearly. That is why we have always stressed not only the importance of the political discussion but also the need to comport ourselves in such a way as to maximize objective consideration of all the political positions being debated.

The IMT leadership is certainly suffering from an advanced case of adaptationism which has led them into tactical, political and even programmatic errors of a serious nature. But that is quite different from your evaluation that they have already adopted a program that "in its every aspect, is irreconcilable with the program of Marxism." If that were the case we should dispense with the struggle to reverse their line and proceed to read them out of the revolutionary movement. The truth of the matter is, on most programmatic questions up to now there has been broad agreement between the LTF and much of the IMT leadership.

The process taking place among the 10,000 or more new, young recruits who have been won to the Fourth International in the last decade is much more complex and contradictory than is implied by your conclusions. While there are forces within our international that are moving in a direction that is incompatible with Marxism, this is not a finished process, and I believe that there are bigger differences within the IMT than there are between the LTF and some forces today inside the IMT faction.

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In discussing the United Secretariat majority's response to the fall of the dictatorship in Portugal, in your letter of August 6, you imply that their position was one of "revisionist betrayal in a revolutionary situation." This characterization of the IMT's line is a gross exaggeration in my opinion and an example of what happens when you start trying to justify the claim that their positions are irreconcilable with Marxism in every aspect, on every question

As you know from reading my report to the SWP National Committee Plenum in June (SWP IIB No. 8 in 1974), comrades in the leadership of the LTF thought the statement adopted by a majority of the United Secretariat at its May meeting was seriously wrong on a number of points. We voted against it because we thought it would disorient the Portuguese comrades and lead them into serious political errors as well as miseducate the entire international.

But one should try to retain a sense of proportion. Revisionism is generally associated with anti-Marxist currents like social democratic reformism, or Stalinism. It is a word that should be used with scientific precision. Erroneous though the United Secretariat statement was on a number of key points (despite the ultraleft line on the troops and "vanguard" actions, despite the confusion on the constituent assembly demand, despite the bending to the mass illusions in the Stalinists) it is still wrong to characterize the IMT as holding to a line of "revisionist betrayal."

Moreover, as I pointed out in my report to the plenum, the original draft of the United Secretariat statement was modified in light of our criticisms, and some statements which have appeared in the press of the Fourth International, such as some of the Rouge editorials, were significantly better than the United Secretariat statement. (Others, such as the articles by Carlos Rossi in Rouge and Quatrième Internationale, have been even worse.) Whether the IMT leadership will insist on their errors after they have had time to consider our criticisms in a more objective and nonfactional manner, remains to be seen. My own opinion is that in all likelihood they will correct some of them. That is certainly to be hoped for and we should try to encourage a development in that direction by advancing cogent and accurate criticisms -- not exaggerated polemics against "revisionist betrayals."

Our goal is to help the Portuguese comrades and the international as a whole orient to a very important and demanding situation.

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Several times in discussing the nature of the political errors being made by the IMT you express the opinion that they are increasingly moving in a right opportunist direction, not an ultraleft one. In discussing Portugal in your August 6 letter you refer to "this extreme rightist (not ultraleftist!) deviation on the part of the IMT." Later in the same letter you talk about "the increasing opportunist degeneration of the IMT."

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It is not clear to me whether you believe this rightist deviation on the part of the IMT represents a new departure, a change in orientation on their part, or whether you think the LTF has been incorrect all along in its political assessment of the basic character of the IMT's errors. But your position is quite different from the assessment made by the comrades who opposed the "turn of the Ninth World Congress" and later initiated the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency.

For example, in June 1970, in his "Contribution to the Discussion on Revolutionary Strategy in Latin America," Joe Hansen stated, "The course prescribed by Comrade Maitan and made official in the Latin American resolution represents a concession to ultraleftism. This is how it must be characterized objectively...."

"Consistent application of the course charted by Comrade Maitan would prove disastrous for the Fourth International. The line could hardly be confined to Latin America or even the colonial world generally, for the same ultraleft tendencies to which the adaptation has been made are operative in the imperialist centers. Fostering an ultraleft course in Latin America would surely be paralleled by permissiveness toward ultraleftism, if not worse, in the imperialist centers. In fact, there is evidence that this has already been occurring in the quite different context of conditions in Britain." (Discussion on Latin America (1968-72) p. 74, IIDB reprints)

A year later, in replying to comrades Maitan, Germain and Knoeller, Joe returned to the problem of adaptation to ultraleftism and dealt with it at length. In concluding he stated:

"To remain in contact with sources of recruitment, and to carry out actual recruitment successfully, does not require adaptation to the mistakes, prejudices, or low level of political experience and understanding encountered among those we are seeking to win over. Their training as Trotskyists must begin in the very process of recruiting them.

"To adapt to the milieu entails three immediate dangers: (1) confusion as to where Trotskyism stands on issues of considerable substance; (2) loss of one's own militants to the milieu; (3) waste of time and missing of opportunities.

"The current permissive attitude toward ultraleftism involves basically similar dangers. Moreover a new logic can be set in motion. Just as entryism fostered the belief among some of those who practiced it that left centrism is Trotskyism, so permissiveness toward ultraleftism can become converted into the conviction that ultraleftism is Trotskyism.

"The outcome can thus be most deleterious to the main task facing our movement as a whole -- construction of a Leninist-type party." ("In Defense of the Leninist Strategy of Party Building," Discussion on Latin America (1968-72), p. 129.)

At the end of 1972 when comrades Blanco, Camejo, Hansen, Lorenzo, and Moreno drew up the main document on which the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency was constituted, they stated:

"The truth is that the problem of ultraleftism already confronted the Fourth International even before the Ninth World Congress. It came with the big influx of radicalized youth in France in 1968, many of whom were ultraleft, and was therefore inevitable. A romantic view of Che Guevara and his Bolivian adventure was one of the features of this ultraleftism. It was a test of the leadership capacities of the Fourth International to overcome this ultraleftism and particularly the uncritical acceptance of Guevarism. When the majority leaders adapted to the ultraleftism of some of the radicalized youth and decided on a guerrilla orientation in Latin America, it became clear -- at least to some leaders of the world Trotskyist movement -- that the sickness was contagious and could spread far beyond Latin America, particularly since further recruiting in the radicalized student movement would strengthen this tendency in the International in view of the failure of the majority leadership to give a correct education to new members.

"Evidence that this was occurring was abundant enough. It was visible not only in the ultraleft position on various issues that were being taken by some Trotskyist groups; it could be seen in the uncritical acclaim given to actions of guerrilla fighters who were in political opposition to Trotskyism. Their politics was disregarded; their guerrilla exploits were pictured as exemplary actions. Grave mistakes made by such guerrillas were even pictured in a way to suggest them as models. This development has been easy to follow in the coverage given by the Red Mole, Rouge, and other journals of the movement to guerrillas in Québec, in Ireland, and many other places besides Latin America." ("Argentina and Bolivia -- the Balance Sheet," IIDB Vol. X, No. 1, p. 51.)

In August of 1973 when the formation of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction was announced, the faction platform emphasized, "Of the above platform, we would now apply greater stress to point No. 3, that is, opposition to the extension of the guerrilla orientation. In the modified form of 'minority violence' this orientation has been projected by the IEC Majority Tendency for Europe (and for other areas as well, to judge from some of the statements made by new adherents to this line in Canada and the United States.)" ("The New Situation in the Fourth International," a Statement by the Leninist Trotskyist Faction, IIDB Vol. X, no. 15, p. 11)

And in assessing the 1974 world congress, Joe Hansen once again reiterated: "What is the significance for the Fourth International of this outcome? It means, in brief, that in face of vigorous and increasing opposition, the ultraleft course on which the international was placed at the Ninth World Congress will be continued until at least the next congress." ("Preliminary Report to the New York Caucus of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction on Fourth World Congress Since Reunification (Tenth World Congress)," by Joseph Hansen, SWP IIB No. 4 in 1974, p. 5)

This assessment of the character of the political line followed by the majority since the period prior to the 1969 world congress is the basis on which our tendency was founded. It is the analysis on which the minority at the 1969 congress has based its entire fight for the last six years. We do not claim that it

7.

is the only conceivable analysis that could be advanced to explain the errors of the majority. But if someone disagrees with this analysis and has an alternative view of the political character of the majority, then it will be virtually impossible to arrive at common positions on the tactical steps to be taken in conducting the political fight within the Fourth International to correct the erroneous line of the majority.

If you are convinced that the problem today is one of an increasing right-wing degeneration of the majority as opposed to an ultraleft bias (which, as we have always said, engenders opportunist errors too) then you have a basic difference of analysis with the platform of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction. It would be incumbent on you to review the recent history of the international in this light and answer a number of questions: When did the majority leadership make the turn from adaptation to ultraleftism (with opportunist errors) to a basically right opportunist course (with some ultraleft hangovers)? Under what pressures? How does this consistent policy manifest itself? Or, if you think no such switch has taken place, how do you evaluate the "turn" of the ninth world congress? Was that, too, a right turn? Or maybe the ninth world congress turn was a fiction? Does the error go back even further? If so, how far? 1963? 1953? 1946? 1938? Depending on your answers to such questions you would also have to explain how it happened that the minority went so far off base in evaluating the majority line. What political weakness in the forces leading the IFF produced such a seriously erroneous line? Etc., etc.

The whole skein can unwind very rapidly.

Developments since the last world congress (such as the position taken by the United Secretariat and FCR on the French presidential election, and the United Secretariat and LCI positions on Portugal) far from constituting a new departure for the majority provided fresh confirmation of the correctness of our insistence on adaptation to ultraleftism being the central axis of the IMT's political line.

In France, for example, while the decision to call for a vote for Mitterrand was an opportunist error, it stemmed from an ultraleft source rather than reflecting a fundamental change in orientation. The FCR called for a vote for Mitterrand because they thought his election would exacerbate the social crisis, destroy the workers' illusions in reformism and bring the showdown nearer. In practice this meant stepped up preparations for the coming "confrontation" and this was reflected throughout the FCR's campaign propaganda. They concentrated heavily on Chile (if the workers had only been armed); on the army (appeal to the soldiers "to prepare to block any move by their reactionary officers"); on the question of armed self defense by the workers and creation of workers' militias; and criticized Lutte Ouvrière for Laguiller's failure to campaign in favor of "minority violence," etc.

Of course they were also afraid of being isolated from the "new mass vanguard" which totally succumbed to the pressure generated by the tremendous illusions the masses of workers had in the Union of the Left.

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Their line reflected their consistent tendency to subordinate program and class independence to armed struggle. It represented a continuation of the same line followed in the 1973 legislative elections where the Ligue Communiste advocated a first round vote for those who rejected the "peaceful road."

In Britain since the world congress, the main thing that has characterized the line of the IMG majority has been their antifascist campaign in which they have announced they will prevent the racist National Front from holding meetings "by any means necessary." Since they are in no position to be able to implement such a line the result has been infantile -- and deadly -- confrontations with the cops. One could hardly imagine a clearer example of the IMT's ultraleft guerrillaist line, which takes the form of minority violence in Europe.

In the recent general elections the IMG did not run any candidates because they said they had devoted all their resources to the antifascist campaign. Instead they called for a vote for Healy's Workers Revolutionary Party as part of the "revolutionary left," and where the WRP wasn't running, they said, "Vote Labour."

In Spain, the most significant new development since the world congress has not been En Marcha's continued adaptation to the Stalinists in the workers commissions or their confused line towards the Assembly of Catalonia and other class collaborationist formations set up by the Stalinists -- although that rightist element of their political line has always been present and may be increasing. The significant new element in En Marcha's line has been their silence or evasive response concerning the press reports of LCR-ETA(VI) commando units going into action for the first time to carry out expropriations and liberate political prisoners being held in Franco's jails.

And in Portugal, you could hardly imagine a more genuine ultraleft orientation during a revolutionary upsurge than that being advocated by the IEC majority! The refusal to call for and take the lead in trying to organize mass mobilizations against the continuation of the colonial wars, favoring actions aimed at the "vanguard" instead, was a thoroughly ultraleft error. To organize small "vanguard" actions to protest the arrest of the editor of the Maoist paper, instead of responding with at least the attempt to mobilize a massive reply was a dangerously ultraleft error.

That opportunist errors appear as an integral part of an ultraleft orientation should be no surprise to us. They always do and we have pointed this out from the very start. But are the current opportunist errors more glaring or gross than the support for the FRA in Bolivia; or the PRT-ERP's totally reformist program for the ERP's neighborhood support committees; or the ERP's line of seeking unity with the Peronist guerrilla groups; or Tariq Ali's characterization of the Unidad Popular as a "united front of reformist workers parties"? I don't think there has been any qualitative change in the IMT's line on this kind of question. They have not suddenly dropped their guerrillaist/minority violence/initiatives-in-action perspective and replaced it with an analysis that popular frontism is the way to advance

9.

the workers interests or guarantee a victorious socialist revolution.

Of course they adapt to those pressures. When you turn your back on the methods of party building outlined in the Transitional Program and start searching for ways to substitute our tiny forces for actions that only a mass revolutionary party could carry out, it is inevitable that you will adapt to all kinds of pressures. You become like a ship without a keel. You cannot sail very close to the wind. You cannot make much headway. You keep getting pushed far off course by the strong gusts. But that doesn't mean you are automatically compelled to turn and run with the wind.

Is the line of the IMT determined simply by their adaptation to whatever pressures in the class struggle are strongest at any given moment? Since there has been a disintegration of many of the ultraleft organizations that flowered in the post-'68 period, and since the bourgeoisie and reformists are once again being forced to advance popular front type solutions to the political, economic and social crises of capitalist Europe, has the IMT therefore abandoned the previous ultraleft bent? Is it now turning toward popular frontism?

But if you think the line of the IMT can be explained by the assumption that they always and immediately adapt to whatever conjunctural pressures are strongest, it is pretty hard to explain, for example, why the IEC majority set off on the guerrillaist line just when most of the guerrillaist organizations were declining. As Hugo Blanco pointed out, the IEC majority passed most of them going in an opposite direction.

In my opinion it is wrong to picture the IMT leadership as automatically and immediately adapting, on the basis of a mechanical one to one ratio to whatever pressures are exerted by the class struggle at any moment.

The ultraleft thrust of the majority's line is rooted in something much deeper than conjunctural fluctuations in the rise and fall of the class struggle in any particular country or continent. It is rooted in the phenomenon we tried to explain in the political resolution submitted to the last world congress by the LTF -- in the historical detour of the world revolution that has marked the post World War II period, from Eastern Europe to China to Cuba to Vietnam. This detour -- rooted in the crisis of proletarian leadership -- had a powerful and disorienting impact on the world Trotskyist movement.

The end of the long detour can only help us to reorient the revolutionary Marxist forces on an international scale, but it is not automatic and it takes time. Until we succeed in reversing the most clear-cut manifestation of the ultraleft deviation from the Fourth International's line -- the programmatic revision of the FI's opposition to minority violence -- there is little hope of putting the Trotskyist movement back on the correct path toward the construction of mass revolutionary parties by applying the methods and concepts of how to win the leadership of the working class that are outlined in the Transitional Program.

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That is why we put such great emphasis on reversing the "turn" of the 1969 world congress. We think our chances of winning a majority of the Fourth International for this position are extremely favorable -- after all, if even three delegates had shifted positions at the last world congress the Argentine and Bolivian documents of the IMT would have been minority line documents!

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2. This brings us to the second point on which we have a different evaluation from the one you express in your letters -- the assessment of the perspectives before the Fourth International, given the differences that currently exist.

You comment in your letter of August 6 that the United Secretariat's public attack on the PST "could end decisively what remains of the unity of the Fourth International. It could come any day, as could an open attack on the SWP for enforcing its rules of democratic centralism. What, then, will the LTF do?"

You state the opinion that "a complete split is what the LTF must prepare for, organizationally and politically."

We have said many times that we consider the danger of a split to be very real, especially because we know that there are comrades in the leadership of the IMT who not only favor a split but are doing everything within their power to consummate it. But as long as we think we can prevent a split from occurring, we will concentrate our energies and collective strength in that direction. Our job is not to prepare for an inevitable split, but to prevent the split. And we do not say this tongue in cheek as a defensive formulation to cover up preparations for an LTF version of Barzman's "real international."

Several times, in different ways, you say that a split would be unprincipled because it is not prepared. It is not clear whether you believe that is the only reason a split would be wrong. It is not the view of the LTF, however. We say, and we mean it, that the political differences as they have been spelled out and clarified do not warrant a split. We do not think, as you seem to, that the IMT as a whole has definitively "abandoned a proletarian Marxist orientation." We do not believe that they have liquidated "the program of Trotskyism into the petty-bourgeois program of centrism," whatever that may be.

The liquidation of Trotskyism may be the logical evolution of some of them if they follow their course to the end. This was the case with the PRT-ERP. But we think we may well be able to force some of them -- maybe even a majority -- to turn back from such an evolution and that is what we are striving to achieve. To give up and prepare for a split both politically and organizationally would be a defeat for the Leninist Trotskyist Faction.

On the contrary, our central task remains one of striving in every way to maximize political clarity.

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3. Your assessment of the "Agreement on Measures to Maintain Unity of the Fourth International" is also quite different from that of the LTF leadership.

You describe it as an agreement that merited only conditional support from the LTF because it contained "hypocritical" and "shameful" points. You seem to doubt that principled politicians could back such an agreement.

The LTF at the world congress not only backed the "Unity Measures," we proposed them. They were not something that we as principled politicians were forced to swallow, or that we accepted only because we really intended to lead the LTF in a quite different direction while "hypocritically" talking about maintaining the unity of the International.

We supported the agreement because we thought it was correct. We thought the measures were in the best interests of the Fourth International as a whole. We meant it when we said we would do everything within our power to relax the factional tensions and try to make the agreement work. Your proposal that we should have immediately launched a political and organizational offensive, while at the same time proclaiming support for the nine points, would have been the height of hypocrisy.

As the events of the last seven months have made quite clear, it was the IMT that followed the course you prescribe. They took the offensive immediately after the world congress locking the LTF out of the day-to-day leadership of the international and exacerbating factional tensions from Argentina to Canada to the United States. It was they who could not abide by the statutes, and even their own political resolution, as the capers of the Internationalist Tendency in the U.S. made quite clear.

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4. This brings us to the questions you raise about the program of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction. You describe the LTF as a single issue faction (the single issue being opposition to the guerrilla warfare strategy and the "minority violence" line of the IMT). You say we have no positions on a number of important issues. The assertion is simply inaccurate.

The fight to reverse the guerrillaist turn of the 1969 world congress has been and remains the axis of the LTF's platform. Any alteration of that axis would be wrong. But if you go down the list of questions you raise, I think you will find that the LTF has rather clearly defined positions on every single one. I would urge you to go back and reread the LTF political resolution in particular, if you have any doubts about this.

For example, I think you will find that the political resolution quite adequately summarizes the line of the resolution submitted by seven of the LTF leaders entitled "Two Assessments of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: A Balance Sheet." You will also find that the general line of the articles on Indochina by Horowitz, Feldman and Johnson are contained in those parts of the resolution dealing with the assessment of the outcome of the Vietnam war and the nature of the Vietnamese CP.

If you reread the section on "Repression and Class Collaboration" I think you will find that it contains an unambiguous line of opposition to all forms of popular frontism -- one which covers quite clearly and explicitly the situations that have arisen in France, Uruguay, Chile and Portugal in the last few years.

The line of the LTF on such questions is unquestionable. As for analysis of current events -- as in Portugal or the 1974 French presidential elections -- the LTF is not required to speak on such questions as they arise unless they have some new acute bearing in the internal life of the international. Certainly it makes little difference whether we write a resolution or counter-resolution on this or that point for a vote in the United Secretariat. The responsibility of the LTF is not to "speak out" on every question. Our job is to loyally act as part of the elected leadership bodies of the international committed to trying to help the FI as a whole work out the correct line. As fresh differences arise, we try to find the appropriate time and place to explain them clearly to the entire ranks of the FI.

I believe the course of action you propose would very rapidly lead to a complete freeze on any collaborative discussion. The IMT and LTF and perhaps Kompass would each simply write up a statement on each new development in the world class struggle, "for the record," and the possibilities of mutually influencing each other's evolution would almost evaporate.

As for the other points that you propose should be incorporated into the LTF program, I think a careful rereading of the LTF political resolution will convince you that most are already part of our platform -- such as women's liberation, the national question, the Arab East, our attitude toward youth work, trade union work, position on the Stalinist and Social Democratic parties, attitude toward the Maoist sects and other small radical grouplets.

As for Cuba, a rather clear position is spelled out in the LTF political resolution also. You obviously disagree with this line and would like to have a thorough discussion concerning it, but the LTF does have a position.

Three things should be made clear in regard to this:

1. Because the LTF political resolution did not appear until the very eve of the last world congress, there was not adequate discussion of it in the world movement, and much of what is contained in the resolution has not been thoroughly absorbed. But I think that problem will be solved in the course of the discussions leading toward the next world congress.

2. Questions like Cuba, Vietnam, China, women's liberation, Ireland, the Arab East, etc. -- are all open for discussion in the International. What does the LTF have to gain from a separate LTF discussion on these issues? What differences there are or may be on such questions cut across both factions. So let's discuss them out together. If we have differences within the LTF on these questions we certainly don't want to hide them. That

13.

is exactly what we object to in the secret functioning of the IMT. They hold their own internal faction discussion in order, among other things, to conceal their real differences from the international as a whole and thus hinder political discussion and clarification.

3. It is wrong to try to use the vehicle of a faction to circumvent the normal channels for discussion in a section, sympathizing group, or the international. Again, this is one of the things we have correctly criticized the IT for. The proper place to argue for your position on Cuba is in the SWP pre-convention discussion when it opens up. It is wrong to try to take advantage of the fact that you belong to a faction so as to circumvent normal discussion procedures. When the party discussion is closed, you can't simply label your document an "LTF" document, and try to circulate it in that guise, thereby attempting to force a discussion.

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5. This brings us to point five, your proposals concerning the functioning of the LTF.

Your proposals could be interpreted as leading in the direction of establishing the LTF as an "international within the international" that has its own discussion bulletin, decides when to open its own discussion and on what questions (irrespective of the right of the elected international leadership to control internal discussion in the international), holds its own world congress, etc. You even propose full oral reports (and discussion) to the faction membership on every United Secretariat meeting, as if the ranks of the international should automatically be privy to all discussion in the United Secretariat.

On your proposal for an internal LTF discussion bulletin I would only add that you are wrong about two points. A faction does not have the right to hide the real views of its members. A faction does not have an automatic right to have an internal discussion bulletin. Such a bulletin must be authorized by the elected leadership of the party (or international) as a whole, and it must be made available to them. An internal discussion bulletin is something different from circulating drafts of documents within a faction or tendency and corresponding about them for the purpose of preparing documents to be submitted to discussion in the party (or international) as a whole.

Secondly, I think you are wrong in asserting that the IIDB has clearly proved to be an inadequate vehicle, an obstacle to internal discussion in the international. Of course, we are all familiar with the repeated failure of the international leadership to translate and circulate the IIDB in a way adequate to the needs of a democratic discussion. But since the world congress the LTF has not been submitting regular contributions to the discussion bulletin. We thought the IMT was wrong to refuse to open the bulletin to contributions concerning the French elections, since this was obviously needed, given the degree of debate the question has engendered in numerous sections. But in general the LTF agreed with the attempt to slow down the pace of the discussion following the world congress. There will be

ample time to consider what course to follow if in the future the IMT decides to start rejecting our contributions.

One final point should be dealt with, and that is the question of structure and leadership of the faction.

You repeatedly talk about the need for a "democratic centralist" faction and an elected leadership. It is not entirely clear what you mean by this, but you seem to mean a structure that would in all ways be parallel to the structure of an international. But a faction, which has quite a different political purpose than an international, normally has a different structure. It is a formation within the normal structures of a section, sympathizing group or international, and subordinate to the normal structures of that organization. The "fully democratic centralist" structure you propose would contravene this norm.

The leadership of the faction is elected -- but not directly through a faction debate and delegated faction congress. It is elected through the normal channels of the democratic centralism of the party and international. For example, within the SWP the leadership of the faction -- which was initiated by comrades in the elected leadership of the party -- is those members of the Political Committee who support the LTF. They act as a steering committee for the LTF in the SWP. Beyond that it is the members of the National Committee who support the LTF.

Internationally, the same thing holds true. The leadership of the LTF, its international steering committee, is composed of the members of the IEC who also belong to the LTF. In a broader sense, the leadership of the faction is really those individual elected leaders of sections and sympathizing organizations who support the LTF. If the IEC members feel it advisable they may decide to elect from their number a smaller coordinating committee that can meet more often, as the LTF steering committee did at its last meeting. The important point is that the leadership is not some alternative body, but is simply that portion of the elected leadership of the international that belongs to the faction. This is commensurate with the political purpose or goal of the faction, which is to win a majority of the international to our line. In every way, our structure and functioning is subordinate to the structure and functioning of the international and to the sections and sympathizing groups of which we are members.

* * *

This letter has been very long, but I thought it worth while and important to clarify the positions of the LTF on several of the points raised in your three letters.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice

New York, N.Y. 10003
May 1, 1974

International Steering Committee
Leninist-Trotskyist Faction

Dear comrades,

The enclosed letter to the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction explains itself. We propose that it be published as an internal discussion document of the faction and that it be made available to all faction members. We are considering also circulating it among other members of the faction in order to obtain additional signatures.

You will note that while the letter specifies several programmatic questions that the faction, in our view, must answer in its political platform, it does not specify the answers to these questions. The letter limits itself to the organizational question, the urgent necessity for the faction to transform itself organizationally so that it operates as a faction rather than as a tendency.

We would like to inform you in advance of the answers we propose to these programmatic questions, so that you can consider them for possible adoption by the faction when it begins to function as a democratic-centralist organization. We think that there is general agreement on most of these questions, but we also believe that discussion of them in the ranks is an unavoidable and absolute necessity because of the urgency that the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction, in this exceptional situation of crisis in the world movement, take correct positions on each of these burning questions.

We will propose that the faction adopt the following political positions:

- (1) For a political revolution in China, a deformed workers state, against the bureaucratic regime headed by the Stalinist Chinese Communist Party. For unconditional defense of the social gains of the Chinese revolution. Adoption of the general line of the draft resolution submitted by seven members of the United Secretariat, "Two Assessments of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: A Balance Sheet."
- (2) For a political revolution in North Vietnam, no confidence in the Vietnamese Communist Party, a Stalinist party; for a Vietnamese section of the Fourth International. No characterization of such agreements as the Vietnam and Laos "peace" agreements, signed in the context of the detente and under conditions of continued imperialist presence, as "victories"; continued defense of the socialist revolution in Indochina and the right of the peoples there to self-determination, as our main task. Support for the general line of the articles on Indochina by Horowitz, Feldman and Johnson.
- (3) Rejection of any support for such bourgeois class-collaborationist formations as the Unidad Popular of Chile, a popular

front, on grounds of principle. An electoral front open to capitalist parties is a capitalist coalition and can never be supported in elections.

These three points must be added to the platform of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction as soon as possible, in the present crisis situation. It is especially clear that they are central and burning issues in the international discussion because the first two have been the subjects of public polemics in the ISR by Tom Kerry, Fred Feldman and George Johnson (in addition to Education For Socialists Bulletins by Tom Kerry and Peng Shu-tse), and the third was the subject of a public polemic against Tariq Ali by Doug Jenness at an educational conference in New York. These issues, especially Vietnam and popular frontism, were central in the internal discussions prior to the SWP convention in December, at least in the New York Local. The faction can no longer avoid placing the principled questions of Stalinism and popular frontism at the center of the international debate, whatever the consequences.

In our opinion, however, the consequences could only be beneficial from the point of view of the immediate interests of the faction, as well as those of the world movement. On each of these questions, the present majority is divided, despite sometimes having even taken a formal position. If the faction makes its position clear, it can only make more apparent the unprincipled nature of the majority bloc and bring about disputes inside it. This, in turn, would make it extremely difficult for the splitters to force a wider split.

An added benefit, from the principled point of view, would be to make clear that the majority faction is not only ultra-left, but opportunist as well.

The argument that broadening the focus of the IWF's platform would increase the possibility of a wider split is thus entirely in error. Centering on these questions would make it more difficult, rather than less, for the extreme revisionist and liquidationist wing of the present majority to force acceptance of its positions on other wings. But if we pretend that these are secondary issues, the majority can quietly unite -- inevitably on the basis of the program of the dominant extreme wing.

It might be argued that the faction cannot add these points to its platform at this time, because it must be prepared to assume the public duties of a world organization. But in that case, it would be all the more urgent to take correct positions on these burning questions and all others. Otherwise, how could we wage a public struggle against sectarian and opportunist groupings, including perhaps a splitist wing of the present majority that succeeded in widening the split? How could we even claim to be a principled international grouping?

Even without the danger of a widened split and without the danger of sections supporting popular fronts or refusing to call for political revolutions in China and North Vietnam, it would be necessary for the world movement to take a clear position on these three issues. How could one possibly argue for a political

revolution effectively if one called the party at the head of the Chinese or North Vietnamese state "centrist," i.e., reformable? Only if they are Stalinist parties does political revolution make any sense at all. If they are centrist parties, then the logical conclusion is to have some confidence in these parties to lead the political revolution. Some majority comrades seem to have this very position. This would be no less harmful than calling for self-reform of the deformed state. The question of Stalinism is not at all separable from the question of political revolution, when we consider it objectively.

The same is true for the question of popular frontism. Some comrades of the majority would agree with us that it would be wrong to vote for the Union of the Left or the Unidad Popular, saying at the same time that these are not popular fronts but rather reformist united fronts. But such a position puts a living Trotskyist party (as opposed to a salon intellectual whose main occupation is reconciling what is irreconcilable) in an impossible position. If the Unidad Popular is of the working class, why not vote for it? This is the question that thinking workers will ask us. A position failing to call a popular front by its name is just as bad as a position of voting for it, when the position is put into practice. Such a position begins by sowing confusion and ends by being a transmission belt to support for popular fronts.

Thus, it is necessary that the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction include these three points in its platform, especially since they have been discussed already, including in public.

There are, in addition, several further points on which an international faction has no choice but to take a clear and correct position. If it does not do so, it cannot possibly function as a faction. We will propose the following points for adoption by the faction as soon as possible, following a democratic discussion in which the ranks of the faction will participate:

(4) Rejection of programmatic united fronts with ultraleft, Maoist and centrist groups unless the program is specified. When we support reformist parties in elections, we do it as a class vote but on the basis of our program. When we support other tendencies to the left of reformist parties, we do it critically, on the basis of our own program, also, but we may in addition conclude temporary blocs on the basis of a specific written program which is made public.

The Ligue Communiste of France, on the other hand, before its dissolution, made the mistake not only of supporting the Union of the Left popular front, but also of supporting Lutte Ouvrière on the sole basis that it was a "far left" group that rejected the peaceful road. Likewise, the IMG of Britain supported the Labour Party without calling it a class alternative, and made the same error as the French comrades had made in relation to a "far left" party in their support for Healy's group. Bob Purdie of the IMG said in Red Weekly of March 18 that the IMG supported the Labour Party because its victory "would be seen as a victory and would increase confidence and combativity." (emphasis added) Thus, the IMG employed the formally correct tactic of critical

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support to the Labour Party, but did so on the same opportunist basis on which the Ligue Communiste had supported the Union of the Left. It isn't any surprise, therefore, that the IMG simultaneously supported the Healyite WRP not on the basis of a principled agreement or on the basis of criticism of Healy's non-revolutionary program, but rather on the basis that the Healyite party was "revolutionary"!

Now, in the French elections, Rouge is calling for a united far-left election campaign, but proposes no program for it and does not indicate that one will be necessary. These errors of principle deserve the sharpest possible condemnation by the LTF. They not only liquidate the program of Trotskyism into the petty-bourgeois program of centrism, but, like the orientation to the "new mass vanguard," also tend to liquidate the cadres of the Fourth International into a petty-bourgeois milieu of sectarianism, separated from the real-life experience of the working class.

(5) The adoption of a program for political revolution in Cuba. Not only the forms, but also the content of workers democracy are lacking in Cuba. Ranks have been introduced into the army, fostering a privileged officer caste; piecework has been introduced as a "socialist" measure; Castro has publicly indicated that bureaucratic privilege in salaries will be instituted on the lower levels, while it is already known that privilege exists on higher levels. The Castroist leadership has adopted the Stalinist theory of "socialism in one country," proclaiming loudly that Cuba is a socialist society. Despite the catastrophe in Chile, following numerous other defeats and disasters, Castro continues the Stalinist foreign policy of support to the Peruvian military government and other capitalist regimes and support to the extension of the detente to all countries of the world. In this way, he serves directly the interests of imperialism in general and U.S. imperialism in particular, as the U.S. press has noted with satisfaction.

The only way to workers democracy in Cuba and a revolutionary foreign policy is political revolution, the first step being the construction of a revolutionary party whose aim would be to replace the Stalinist Cuban Communist Party at the head of the socialist revolution in order to prevent its further betrayal. The Fourth International, while continuing the unconditional defense of the Cuban revolution, must also begin the long-overdue task of preparing the programmatic and organizational basis for a Cuban section.

Thus, in addition to repudiating the Castroist line adopted at the 1969 World Congress, the Fourth International must revise and update its positions taken at the 1965 congress and the 1963 Reunification congress. The 1965 congress, for example, stated that the Latin American "vanguard," implicitly including the Castroists, overcame its errors in guerrilla struggle, and "little by little a more mature conception of armed struggle displaced this putschist tendency, a conception fusing guerrilla struggle, armed mass struggle and the organization of the masses in pursuit of economic demands." (ISR, Spring 1966, p. 42.) The same 1965 congress decided that Castroism, despite the inclusion of the

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Cuban CP into the world current led by Moscow, was "an autonomous and fundamentally revolutionary current of the Communist movement owing ideological allegiance to neither Peking nor Moscow. They have proved this in all the fields that are decisive in characterizing a revolutionary tendency..." (ibid., p. 84.) The 1963 "16 points," on which Reunification was based, stated, more prudently, that the "exact form" of the Cuban state "is yet to be settled," and made no direct characterization of Castroism, while the document passed at the 1963 congress merely speculated hopefully about "the infusion of Trotskyist concepts in this new Castroist current." ("Dynamics of World Revolution Today," p.17.) But in 1966 Castro made a vicious public attack on Trotskyism.

To say the least, none of these documents is adequate today as a guide for a world Trotskyist organization on the question of Cuba and Castroism. They must be corrected and brought up to date. We must carry out to its logical conclusion the task outlined by Peng Shu-tse in "Return to the Road of Trotskyism" (1969), which pointed out that the guerrilla warfare strategy "is not an alternative strategy to the peaceful-road-to-socialism strategy advocated by the Stalinists, but ... will only help the opportunism of the Stalinists as well as American imperialism," and called on the world movement to "thoroughly criticize all the Cuban leadership's weaknesses."

The publication in the internal bulletin of a document calling for political revolution in Cuba by Comrade Upandranath Roy of India, who is rumored to be a member of the LTF, and the decision of the present majority to propose a debate or discussion on Cuba for the coming year, make it essential for the LTF to take the correct position on this important question.

(6) Instead of an orientation toward a "new mass vanguard" composed of petty-bourgeois and student layers as well as Maoist, centrist and sectarian currents, the world movement must orient toward the workers, especially through their mass trade union organizations and their political parties. Special attention must be paid to the social-democratic and Stalinist parties, as we can expect differentiations and crises inside them, reflecting the growing instability of the world economy. The "new mass vanguard" orientation is in reality a fundamental deviation from the Trotskyist proletarian orientation and from Point 5 of "For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement," the basis of the 1963 Reunification, which stated in part, "The Trotskyist movement recognizes that the main task is not simply to wage literary war on reformism and Stalinism, but to actually win these socialist-and Communist-minded workers [of the mass reformist parties] to the program and organization of revolutionary Marxism."

A correct proletarian orientation would include an orientation toward the youth, as outlined in the 1969 resolution, "The Worldwide Radicalization of Youth and the Tasks of the Fourth International," and a tactical orientation toward tendencies moving in the direction of Trotskyism. It would have as a guide the second section of "Return to the Road of Trotskyism," in which Comrade Peng wrote: "Our orientation toward the working class must, above all, be concretely based on our work in the trade unions... Only with such a concrete plan of orientation

toward the working class can we envisage the construction of a mass revolutionary party capable of taking power."

(7) For participation in the nationalist movements in the colonial world and movements of the oppressed nationalities in all countries, driven forward by the progressive nationalist sentiments of the masses. While participating in these movements to advance them, the vanguard party must always maintain its organizational and ideological independence as the representative of the working class. The party must at the same time support the progressive democratic demands of all non-proletarian sectors of the popular masses, which imperialism in its death agony is increasingly unable to grant.

(8) For participation in the women's liberation movement and recognition of the important role of mass feminist sentiment among women in bringing them toward revolutionary conclusions. The world party cannot face the crises of the future without addressing the problems of more than one-half of humanity struggling for its basic human and democratic rights.

(9) For sections of the Fourth International in each country of the Middle East, whose program will include the early abolition of artificial national frontiers imposed by imperialism. For unconditional support to the Arab side in any war to regain land seized by Israel. Unconditional support to the Palestinian people in their struggle to regain their homeland and basic human dignity. Support to the slogan, "For a democratic, secular Palestine," while pointing out that this can only come about through a socialist revolution and a socialist Middle East. No confidence in the program of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist leaderships such as Fateh. Opposition to military tactics such as terrorism when used as a substitute for mass action by the Palestinian and Arab peoples. Electoral support to Rakah, the Israeli CP, only as a workers party, not as an "anti-Zionist" party. Against the slogan of Jewish self-determination in the Arab East in any form.

Comradely,

Bill Gottlieb David Keil
(Lower Manhattan branch, New York Local)

May 1, 1974

To the Steering Committee of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction

Dear comrades,

The world Trotskyist movement has now been plunged into the worst crisis in its history. The organizational crisis was recognized in 1973 after it was learned that the "IEC Majority Tendency" was in reality a secret faction, and the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction was proclaimed. Meanwhile, the Argentine split was extended to many other countries. By the time of the world congress, a full 114 of the 270 mandates (42%) were from countries where open splits have occurred along factional lines. The publication of revisionist positions and the carrying out of terrorist actions have necessitated public polemics against comrades of the Fourth International. Thus, it is clear that a de facto split, unprepared and hence not principled, already exists in the world movement, and has existed for some time with a tendency only to widen.

It is well known that a wing of the present majority has been working toward further widening and even completing this split. This wing has apparently won control in the majority tendency and has effectively excluded the LTF from participation in the Bureau of the United Secretariat, the day-to-day working body of the world center. Members of the Internationalist Tendency in New York are organizing deliberate open violations of discipline as provocations, claiming brazenly to have the authority of the world movement, in an obviously coordinated attempt to force their own expulsion and, they hope, a complete split.

The basic source of this organizational crisis is the flight from Marxism by the central leadership of the Fourth International, the leaders of the present majority tendency. This was most clearly expressed by the adoption, at the Ninth World Congress in 1969, of a resolution on Latin America which outlined a program and conception of "armed struggle" which came not from the arsenal of Marxism but from that of Castroism and, in the last analysis, of petty-bourgeois anarchism. At that time, there was every reason to hope that the leadership of the International might learn from its error. But in spite of the disaster in Bolivia and the fiasco of the official section in Argentina, it learned nothing. On the contrary, it deepened and extended the error geographically. This bankrupt strategy has now been extended to Europe, as is vividly illustrated by the majority's attitude toward the assassination of Franco's right-hand man, Carrero Blanco.

But the deviations are by no means limited to those of an "ultraleft" nature. The majority leaders have tail-ended world Stalinism in declaring the betrayal of Vietnam, organized by Moscow and Peking on behalf of Washington, to be a "victory." One of them, Pierre Rousset, has written a book that, judging from his contribution to the ISR, is an apology for Vietnamese Stalinism. Chinese Stalinism has been prettified as "centrism," and critical support has been extended to Mao's bureaucratic purge known as the "Cultural Revolution." In the March, 1973 parliamentary elections in France, the Ligue Communiste (now dis-

solved) extended critical support to the bourgeois popular front formation, the Union of the Left, leading the French section to urge a vote for some members of the "Left Radical" party, a bourgeois party. Related to this has been the discovery that the government of the late Salvador Allende was not really a popular front, at least not during certain periods, such as when the military was in Allende's government! Ernest Mandel has "discovered" that the semi-colonial countries can achieve their full national independence within the framework of the world imperialist system. Pierre Frank states that there is no such thing as political principles.

The present majority has adopted an orientation toward a "new mass vanguard," which is pronounced capable of being transformed into an "adequate instrument." In reality, the turn toward this co-called vanguard is a turn away from the workers, just as the class struggle in Europe is sharpening, as can be seen by the recent events in Britain and the more recent upheaval in Portugal. The talk of an "adequate instrument" implies a repudiation of the Leninist combat party, which is only natural once one has abandoned a proletarian Marxist orientation. Everywhere the majority is turning away from mass struggle, whether of the workers or of their allies. Instead, its orientation is to the world of "far left" sects made up of petty-bourgeois intellectuals divorced from the real life of the working class of their countries. This is best illustrated by the practice in France and Britain of giving electoral support, on no clear programmatic basis, to any group that is "left" of the Stalinists, no matter what their program is or how slight their significance in the political life of the nation and its proletariat.

Thus it is clear that, in addition to having the most dangerous possible organizational stance, the present majority faction is based on a full political program which, in its every aspect, is irreconcilable with the program of Marxism.

Under conditions of increasing liquidation of the program and organization of Trotskyism by the present majority and the ever-widening split in the world movement, it is urgent that immediate steps be taken to prevent the split from being widened further and to wage the sharpest possible political and organizational struggle against the liquidators of Trotskyism. It has become absolutely necessary that the Marxist wing of the international movement, the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction, weld itself into a genuine, democratic-centralist faction with a program to return the world movement to a proletarian orientation with a Marxist program.

By its very nature, a faction differs from a tendency, both by its organizational forms and by the tasks it sets itself. A tendency is simply a loose grouping of militants around a few points. Members of a tendency don't call into question the proletarian nature of the politics of those they oppose and do not challenge their ability to lead a Trotskyist organization. Comrades form a faction, on the other hand, only when they have no confidence whatsoever in the other comrades and wish to reject their entire political program. A faction is "a party within a party," and a faction declaration is a declaration of war. Faction fights are always, in the final analysis, reflections of the

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class struggle. For these reasons, a faction, in contrast to a tendency, demands a democratic-centralist organization of its own. It is in this way that a fuller program can be worked out and an effective struggle can be waged. Factions need not be politically monolithic. On the contrary, tendencies can exist within factions.

The decision to transform the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency into a faction was a sad necessity; the action of August, 1973, corresponded to the objective requirements of the situation. Unfortunately, however, the LTF has not become a truly democratic-centralist faction with a full program and an appropriate stance. The faction lacks an internal discussion bulletin, leading to democratic decision-making meetings, or an elected leadership. It has taken no position on a number of important issues and continues to base itself on the single issue of guerrilla warfare and "minority violence." In the SWP, for example, the vote for delegates to the December, 1973, convention was based solely on approval of the "Balance Sheet" resolution and rejection of the central IEC Majority resolutions.

It might be objected that adopting a full program would make a total split in the world movement more likely and perhaps shatter the unity of the LTF. Such objections, however, would be mistaken. As Jack Barnes explained at the August, 1973, convention in Ohio, a democratic-centralist faction can at certain times be the only hope for maintaining organizational unity with the opponent faction. Today is one of those times. In the present situation, the faction can become a stronger pole of attraction for the intermediate (Kompas and "Against-The-Stream") tendencies if it offers a full alternative program to the liquidationist majority program. Thus it can force the majority to hold back from a split. A correct program, defended in a disciplined and aggressive way, can even attract sectors of the present majority bloc or at least bring about disputes inside this bloc which could hinder the impulse to split.

A good historical analogy is the decision of Lenin to form the Bolshevik faction. Over time, Lenin was able to weld all Russian Marxist revolutionaries into a single, tightly organized combat party. This was in spite of the fact that the Russian revolutionary Marxists were far from agreement on everything. The Bolsheviks always had a very active internal life. This policy of Lenin's bore its ultimate fruit when Trotsky and his followers joined the Bolsheviks. Lenin was able to bring into a solid combat party not only those who had originally supported him, but also those revolutionaries who had incorrectly opposed him and supported the Mensheviks. It was this policy which ultimately made the victory of the October Revolution possible. If we follow similar policies today, we can be confident of similar results.

What has been the recent experience of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction? At the World Congress, the majority flagrantly violated the pre-congress agreement to limit the agenda, as well as the agreed-upon preconditions for a democratic world congress, by unilaterally placing on the agenda a document which had not been discussed or voted on in most sections. Unity was only preserved at the cost of placing the largest party of the Fourth

International, the PST, a party deeply integrated into the class struggle and based on Trotskyist principles, on an equal footing with two guerrillaist sects, as a sympathizing group; and at the cost of according an ultraleft group of conscious splitters from the Canadian section the status of sympathizing group -- among other major concessions. Worse, the unity agreement included a hypocritical point in which each tendency or faction was to make a statement at the close of the congress "proclaiming their firm support to maintaining the unity of the Fourth International." Principled politicians were thus forced to proclaim confidence in and adherence to a unity based on a de facto split in almost half the world movement, a unity based on shameful conditions and a non-Trotskyist line, and under the leadership of conscious splitters; while unprincipled politicians were enabled to claim that they will preserve unity, to claim credit as supporters of unity while already, at the very time, discussing how or when to slander and organizationally split from ("isolate and politically defeat," in Massey-Barzman's delicate language) the minority. Members of the international majority in New York are already using this agreement to claim that the LTF has agreed that the congress was democratic and fully authoritative.

Such an agreement, which in reality formalizes a partial split, all in the name of "unity," can only be supported on the condition that the faction take the offensive, politically, and strengthen itself organizationally, in a continuing struggle for the allegiance of the cadres of the world movement. Following the congress, however, the LTF meeting, as reported by Joseph Hansen, did not decide to take the offensive by elaborating a full program and by moving toward democratic-centralist internal functioning, but rather decided to "relax factional tensions" and "let the majority test its line." Of course, there could be no objection to such decisions in themselves; but it is impossible to take such an attitude without simultaneously specifying openly that factional tensions cannot possibly be decreased unless the majority leadership reverses its evident intention of increasing them, and that the majority has already, in our opinion, been shown to be incapable of understanding that its line, which has been tested for five years, is bankrupt. By themselves, "relax factional tensions" and "let the majority test its line" are attitudes characteristic of a tendency, not a faction, especially not a faction whose task is to prevent an immediate split forced by conscious splitters and to elaborate a program to counter the liquidation of Trotskyism in every sphere.

For all the reasons given above, we propose that the following specific measures be taken to ensure the democratic-centralist character of the faction and to counteract the danger of an unprepared, unprincipled split in the world Trotskyist movement:

(1) An internal LTF discussion bulletin, open to contributions from all LTF members on the questions being discussed in the world movement.

(2) Faction coordinators and other officers of the LTF to be elected by the members and to have authority, when necessary, over the functioning of LTF members, with regular faction meetings.

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(3) Full reports to all LTF members on all LTF Steering Committee meetings, with oral discussion to follow. The Steering Committee should also report to the membership on all United Secretariat meetings and other developments.

(4) A full meeting of the world faction, to be held within a year from now, with decisions binding on all members. The agenda should not be limited in advance, and should include provision for discussion and decision on the following questions:

(a) The nature of the Chinese workers' state and the character of the Chinese CP.

(b) The nature of the North Vietnamese workers' state and the character of the Vietnamese Communist Party; also, the character of the Indochina "peace" agreements.

(c) The nature of popular frontism: the class character of such formations as the Unidad Popular of Chile, the Union of the Left in France, the Frente Amplio in Uruguay, and the PRG in South Vietnam.

(d) The precise implications of the proletarian orientation: the correct orientation of the Trotskyist movement toward the trade unions, the mass reformist parties and the youth and students; the class nature of the majority's "new mass vanguard."

(e) How Trotskyists function in relation to centrist and ultraleft tendencies, especially in election campaigns; on what basis may support be given to groups such as Lutte Ouvrière and the Workers Revolutionary Party of Healy.

(f) The nature of the Cuban workers' state and the Cuban Communist Party: whether a political revolution is required, as Comrade Roy of India advocates. (This question must especially be discussed in the LTF in view of the majority's decision to propose the Cuban question for upcoming discussion in the world movement.)

(g) The national question: the nature of nationalism of the oppressed.

(h) The women's liberation movement: the nature of feminism.

(i) The Middle East: whether a single section should be built for the whole Arab East, as the majority says, or sections in each existing state; the character of the slogan "For a Democratic, Secular Palestine."

(j) Tasks of the Fourth International in Ireland.

(k) Balance sheet and tasks in Chile.

When the faction democratically adopts positions on these major questions and others, they should be formally added to the list of positions around which the faction is organized.

Comradely,
Bill Gottlieb, Lower Manhattan Branch
David Keil, Lower Manhattan Branch

New York, N.Y.
August 6, 1974

To the LTF International Steering Committee

Dear Comrades,

We have received Mary-Alice's note indicating that a reply to our May 1 letter is being drafted. We are writing again now in order to make a specific suggestion that the LTF hold a faction meeting at the Oberlin conference so that comrades from around the world who are there can hear a report on developments and discuss the situation in the world movement. This kind of meeting, which would be similar to the New York city-wide LTF meetings but larger, is necessary because the political and organizational crisis of the world movement in getting deeper all the time, by all indications.

On May 1, we wrote you urging that the LTF transform itself into a democratic-centralist organization and hold a discussion which would lead to the adoption of a full political program. We especially urged that a discussion bulletin be launched which would allow members of the Faction to discuss the questions of popular frontism and Stalinism, which were not up for a vote at the World Congress and which are central issues in the world dispute. "Under conditions of increasing liquidation of the program and organization of Trotskyism by the present majority and the ever-widening split in the world movement," we wrote, "it is urgent that immediate steps be taken to prevent the split from being widened further and to wage the sharpest possible political and organizational struggle against the liquidators of Trotskyism." We pointed out that a central aspect of the IMT's politics is its opportunism, its adaptationism toward Stalinism and popular frontism. We argued that the "unity agreement" passed at the World Congress, while preventing an unprepared and unprincipled complete split and thus meriting conditional support, also represented only "a unity based on a de facto split in almost half the world movement, a unity based on shameful conditions and a non-Trotskyist line, and under the leadership of conscious splitters." These splitters, we pointed out, "were enabled to claim that they will preserve unity, to claim credit as supporters of unity while already, at the very time, discussing how or when to slander and organizationally split from ('isolate and politically defeat,' in Massey-Barzman's delicate language) the minority."

We said we were thinking of circulating this letter among LTF members to obtain more signatures. Nevertheless, we haven't done so, though we note that no one has objected to the fact that we were considering this.

But our letter was outdated almost as soon as it was written. Every point that it made was confirmed ten times over by events. Yet the LTF has not taken the measures which logically follow from these events and which we proposed in May. Instead, the processes of unprincipled split and opportunist degeneration of the IMT have continued without the LTF taking effective measures to stop them. The faction has marked time.

(1) Just after writing our letter, we learned that the FCR in France was supporting the bourgeois popular-front candidate Mitterrand. Such an action as supporting a class-collaborationist formation in an election merited a blast from the LTF that would blow the IMT sky-high. Instead, the LTF members of the United Secretariat merely observed and listened to the discussion of the French elections at the first meeting following the FCR decision. At the second meeting following, May 29-30, the LTF failed to present a resolution condemning the FCR policy, while the IMT was able to pass a motion justifying it and attempting to answer the Marxist arguments against it -- arguments which the LTF was for some reason unable to bring forward in the form of a statement. The LTF has yet to present a position on the French elections, although the June 30 LTF letter reports that some LTF comrades are drafting a document on the French elections. This document, according to the report, will explain "the fundamentally ultraleft character of the Krivine campaign and how this led the FCR into an opportunist error on the second round." Thus, it will attempt to minimize the FCR and IMT's adaptation to popular frontism by subordinating it to ultraleftism. This error is a result of the LTF leadership's failure to see that the IMT "self-criticism" over the 1973 French legislative elections was not thoroughgoing. The fundamental question in France is whether the Union of the Left is a popular front, a bourgeois class-collaborationist formation. On this question, no correction was made by the IMT. Thus the consistent opportunist policy was continued in 1974 without hesitation. To call this an isolated "opportunist error" as part of a "fundamentally ultraleft" policy is to compound the error of the LTF and later LTF in failing to attack the IMT on this question.

The fundamentally opportunist character of the IMT position on the French elections is made clear by its own defense of its policy. The vote for Mitterrand was not defended as a class vote, however mistaken such a defense would be. It is defended on the basis that the masses support the Union of the Left; abstention is rejected because it would have been seen as "stopping the working class from going through the experience of reformism in power." The extreme opportunism of the IMT is summarized in the statement, "the Mitterrand vote has but one function: to create better tactical conditions..." Thus, the principle of a class vote as a way of educating the masses is abandoned in favor of tactics and avoiding unpopular positions.

Instead of the LTF attacking the IMT position by taking its own position to the world movement, Caroline Lund and Tony Thomas as individuals explained the Trotskyist position on the French elections in the Militant. Whether this was only a personal opinion, shared by Comrade Therese, or the position of some political body, remains obscure, as Pierre Frank sarcastically pointed out from his own standpoint. In replying to Pierre, Joseph Hansen was forced to state that the issue of the French elections was not important enough for the SWP Political Committee to take a position.

But even the SWP PC taking a position on this crucial issue would not be enough. It is mandatory that the LTF take a position. It can be categorically predicted that if it does not, the IMT will feel free to take the next good opportunity it gets to

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support another popular-front candidate. If this happens, the LTF will share the responsibility and will have shown itself incapable of fulfilling its main task.

(2) Perhaps even more important than the French elections is the situation in Portugal. In our May 1 letter, we were only able to allude to Portugal. Since then, the IMT has passed a shameful resolution in the United Secretariat which the LTF was forced to vote against despite its lack of a counter-resolution, because of the IMT resolution's complete rupture with Trotskyist principles. The resolution describes the counter-revolutionary work being done on behalf of Portuguese imperialism by the CP and SP as shilly-shallying and vacillations! Actually, there is no element of shilly-shallying and vacillation on the part of the CP and SP -- they are carrying out the tasks assigned to them by finance capital with deadly consistency and determination. The resolution further covers up the role of these agents of imperialism by failing to pose the task of building a mass movement in Portugal demanding the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Portuguese troops from its African colonies. And as if this were not enough, the resolution fails to call on the CP and SP to form a government, indeed it fails to call for the formation of any kind of workers' or workers' and farmers' government! Portugal, a test for all political tendencies, presented the LTF with the obligation to wage an aggressive campaign in the world movement against this extreme rightist (not ultraleftist) deviation on the part of the IMT. Yet the LTF does not even have a statement on record or even under discussion, to our knowledge. One might ask, "What good, then, is the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction if it does not defend the revolutionary politics of Lenin and Trotsky against revisionist betrayal in a revolutionary situation?" We urgently hope that the LTF will be able to prevent this question from being asked in too many places by presenting the world movement with its positions on Portugal.

(3) In our letter, we pointed to the revisionism of the IMT on theoretical questions. Since then, Mandel's article on the Common Market has appeared. Mandel asserts that Europe is likely to be unified by a capitalist super-imperialist state to solve the economic crisis. He thus revises Leninist theory in what can only be called a bizarre fantasy. Just as Europe is beginning to fall apart at the seams, Mandel argues that it can be unified under a single state based on capitalism -- no doubt a state without internal borders or wage differentials and with a single armed forces, language and currency! Such revisionist articles require a response from comrades of the LTF. They throw into question all of Mandel's economic theories, which have been treated as authoritative for so long by everyone.

(4) In our letter, we pointed to the organizational crisis of the world movement, the fact that at the World Congress, "a full 114 of the 270 mandates (42%) were from countries where open splits have occurred along factional lines." Now the I.T. of the United States has in effect split, with the prior knowledge of the IMT leadership, declaring immediately after the appropriate decision by the SWP to drop its members from the membership lists, that the SWP has no right even to decide its own conditions of membership. An IMT member of the United Secretariat put his stamp of approval on this statement. Thus the large

majority of cadres in countries where both factions have supporters are members of separate organizations. This situation has been fostered and is approved by the IMT.

In our letter, we pointed out that "members of the Internationalist Tendency in New York are organizing deliberate open violations of discipline as provocations..." Following this, the I.T. organized its May 11 action and held a convention formalizing its secret independent status. Can any more proof be needed that the "unity agreement" is being used to foster splits and that a complete split is what the LTF must prepare for, organizationally and politically? The I.T. split is proof that the only way to prevent a total split is to launch an ideological counteroffensive.

The I.T. experience also showed that the IMT's forces are deeply divided on such political questions as Stalinism. Some I.T. members felt a discussion on Vietnam inside the I.T. would destroy its effectiveness; others resigned over the question of Stalinism because they disagree with the revisionist Stern-Walter position. This situation is not limited to the U.S. If the LTF took the offensive politically, with clear positions, it could split and destroy the IMT.

(5) In our letter, we did not point out the internal dangers to the LTF in failing to discuss and take positions on the major questions in world politics. These dangers have now been shown, however, in the adherence of Debby Leonard to the IMT, Tom Leonard's protest against the PC decision of July 4, the resignation of three members of the LTF from the IMG, and the defection of the Dowson group in Canada. We are not familiar with the details in any of these cases, but it is clear that there is a general danger of disintegration of the LTF if it fails to organize and define itself more tightly and clearly as a Bolshevik faction on a full Leninist program. These defeats for us should be indications that the LTF is failing to be the inspiring pole of attraction that it could be in face of the increasing opportunist degeneration of the IMT.

(6) Our letter pointed out that the splittist wing "has apparently won control in the majority tendency and has effectively excluded the LTF from participation in the Bureau of the United Secretariat..." This exclusion was formalized at the May Secretariat meeting. The same meeting voted not to open the IIDB for contributions on the French elections, thus making it all the more imperative for the LTF to discuss France internally, since it cannot be done in the world movement as a whole. Similarly, at the July Secretariat meeting, the IMT showed that it was unwilling to organize a meaningful internal discussion, even of those questions specified in the agreement made before the World Congress.

At the same meeting, the IMT showed that it was also unwilling to keep honest records of the Secretariat meetings, according to Johnson's report in the July 18 LTF letter. Nor was the IMT willing to send even these inaccurate minutes to all the IEC members! Such a policy can only be called an open attempt to destroy the United Secretariat completely, equivalent to a walk-out but less honest.

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Finally, the IMT has decided to publicly attack the PST of Argentina on what appears to be fraudulent "scandals" it has worked up over some mistakes in the editing of Avanzada Socialista. Such a public attack could end decisively what remains of the unity of the Fourth International. It could come any day, as could an open attack on the SWP for enforcing its rules of democratic centralism. What, then, will the LTF do?

Some comrades would argue that an internal discussion in the LTF would violate democratic centralism by making it into a secret faction, and that the International Internal Discussion Bulletin must be relied upon. This is mistaken in all ways; equally as much as the position that the LTF's 1972 "Balance Sheet" is sufficient and there is nothing more to be added or to discuss.

There is no democratic centralism to be violated in the Fourth International. There is only a non-aggression pact, respected by the LTF but not by the IMT. The World Congress "unity agreement" formally put democratic centralism into abeyance. Thus, who could argue that the LTF is breaking democratic centralism? The last to do so would be the IMT, which holds its own internal discussions and possesses an entire party apparatus -- all on a secret and, presumably, undemocratic basis.

Even if the Fourth International were based on democratic centralist norms, declared factions would have every right to circulate internal discussion material and to enforce political discipline on their members, just as much as leadership bodies have the right to keep their deliberations internal and enforce committee discipline, and do so as a general rule. A contrary norm would foster secret, informal discussions on a clique basis rather than a principled one. Factions would circulate internal material in the form of "personal" letters. Suppression of internal discussion and discipline in factions means suppression of factions as well as suppression of private correspondence. Every faction has a right to regulate its own internal functioning, as long as it is at all times loyal and subordinate to the discipline of the party. This includes keeping some political differences internal (just as the leading bodies do not inform the membership of every compromise and every paragraph dropped from the initial rough draft of a political resolution) and deciding which questions are central and which are subordinate. If a faction is based on a rotten unprincipled bloc, the party cadres will smell it; organizational measures will not be needed.

A secret faction is not a faction which keeps its internal discussions secret, but one which keeps its existence secret.

Lastly, it must be acknowledged that the IIDB is not an adequate vehicle for discussion. It has not been published for seven months, except the Minutes of the World Congress; the IMT does not want it to function; vital questions such as Latin America, Europe and France in particular, will not be discussed; and the IMT would only use in a factional way differences among LTF members expressed in the IIDB in any case.

Thus there is every reason for the LTF to launch its own internal discussion. Holding a faction meeting at Oberlin is the

very least that can be done. After that, the proposals we made in our May 1 letter can be implemented.

[...] We will now be showing these May 1 letters to other comrades who we know to be concerned about the crisis in the Fourth International, and we will be discussing the Cuban question informally with the aim of producing a resolution for the next SWP internal discussion and for the LTF internal bulletin when one is launched.

Comradely,

David Keil
Bill Gottlieb

August 8, 1974

Dave Keil
Bill Gottlieb

Dear Comrades,

In reply to your letter of August 6, we would like to inform you that there will be a meeting of the elected steering committee of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction at the end of August in Canada.

The Socialist Workers Party National Office informs us that there are no plans for a meeting of members of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction in the SWP at the upcoming Socialist Educational Conference.

I'm sure you and the other members of the ITF in the New York Local will receive a report on the steering committee meeting after it is held, through the normal procedures for such reports.

The other points raised in your letter will be taken up along with the reply to your earlier letter of May 1.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice Waters
for the steering committee

cc: SWP N.O.

August 9, 1974

Dave Keil
Bill Gottlieb

Dear Comrades,

We received today in the National Office of the party copies of your August 6 letter to the international steering committee of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction, and their reply to you.

On the point you raise about beginning to circulate discussion material, I would like to call to your attention the fact that there has been no decision to open a literary discussion in the SWP. The provisions of the constitution and organizational principles of the party concerning unregulated private circulation of such material -- nationally or internationally -- are in full effect.

The proposed submission of any material to the International Internal Discussion Bulletin must be done through the elected leadership of the section or sympathizing group.

As you know, the Leninist Trotskyist Faction has not initiated an internal discussion bulletin of its own outside the discussion bulletins of the world movement and the sections and sympathizing groups.

I would be glad to set aside some time at the Socialist Activists and Educational Conference to discuss this with you as well as some of the other matters raised in your letters.

Comradely,

Jack Barnes

[The following motion was adopted by the central committee of the French Front Communiste Révolutionnaire during a plenum held at the end of August 1974.]

Motion on the USA

The Central Committee of the FCR, having examined the various documents concerning the expulsion of the IT from the SWP (material from the Control Commission and the Political Committee of the SWP on the alleged split of the IT; the IT protest demanding their immediate readmission):

- 1) Condemns the bureaucratic move of expelling from the SWP the IT comrades, who are in agreement with the political positions of the IMT; and declares itself in favor of their immediate, collective readmission to the SWP with all the rights of a minority faction. This obviously implies respect on their part for the democratic centralist norms in effect in the Fourth International.
- 2) In conformity with the statutes of the Fourth International, favors that the International Control Commission should appraise itself of the facts concerning this serious crisis which has broken out in the American Trotskyist organization and report to the next IEC meeting. The IEC is the only body qualified to propose measures to resolve this crisis and to dispel the grave danger of a split in the International resulting from the scandalous initiative taken by the SWP leadership -- politically in agreement with the positions of the minority faction of the IEC -- in expelling the IT.
- 3) Rejects the call for a special World Congress issued by the SWP's Political Committee in its July 4 statement. Until the next World Congress, the decisions made by majority vote at the Tenth World Congress, after a debate in which several international tendencies were democratically counterposed, are in force; and the leadership which was regularly elected and recognized by the Congress is authorized to carry out the political and organizational mandates which it received from the delegates to the Tenth World Congress.

The call for a special World Congress is nothing but an act of blackmail, which the Central Committee of the FCR firmly rejects, directed against those decisions and the legitimacy of that leadership.

It is simply a means of sidetracking the necessary political debate, which ought to take place next in preparation for the Eleventh World Congress, into sterile organizational polemics.

In addition, given the present conditions of extreme tension in relations between the IMT and the IEC minority faction such a Congress could only contribute to accelerating a dangerous split dynamic in the world Trotskyist movement, which has been given new impetus by the SWP Political Committee's decision.

- 4) Reaffirms its adherence to the principle of unity of the International, through respect for and application of Leninist

organizational norms of democratic centralism, the only way to enable the organizational strengthening and political advancement of the Fourth International.

The unity of the Fourth International is seriously jeopardized today. The IEC minority faction and the SWP leadership bear the overwhelming responsibility for this before the militants of the International. Along with them, the FCR stands mobilized to preserve the unity of the International, the rights of all its militants, the functioning and authority of its leadership bodies which were regularly and democratically elected by the Tenth World Congress, and also favors better preparation for the Eleventh World Congress of the Fourth International within the time period prescribed in the statutes.

Central Committee: unanimously in favor

Control Commission: unanimously in favor, with one abstention