

# INTERNAL BULLETIN

WORKERS PARTY  
SECTION OF THE  
FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

NO. 2

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LETTER OF MEXICAN COMRADES TO CO. RADE LEBRUN

Dear Comrade:

We have followed the polemics of the fight taking place in the S.W.P. around the problem of the USSR and the Russo-Finnish war with the most careful attention. Nor are we unaware of the of the organizational conclusions arrived at by the Minority. A resolution has been published in "Clave" containing the position of the Mexican section, adopted almost unanimously. The same unanimity prevails in rejecting the definition of "bureaucratic conservatism" which serves as the Minority's banner.

We deeply regret that you, as Latin American representative on the I.E.C., should be a part of the Minority forces, which seem to be decided on a split course. The seriousness of this step and of the political errors of the Minority impose upon us the duty of declaring, in the name of the Mexican section, our complete disagreement with your adherence to the Minority and our opposition to you as representative to the I.E.C.

The Mexican section protests the fact that it was not consulted by you even once, notwithstanding the importance of the political problems under discussion and in view of the fact that the unity of one of our best sections is at issue. The rest of the sections and groups of the Continent seem to have been treated with the same disdain. We are, of course, certain that the majority of them rejects the position of the American Minority and that all are opposed to the split perspective adopted by the Cleveland Conference. We believe we have the right to inquire whether the Brazilian section, to which you belong, or any other sections have been consulted and approve the position you support.

As far as the Mexican section is concerned, opposing the Minority tendencies, it cannot consider itself represented by you on the I.E.C. and consequently it does not acknowledge this representation. We are naming comrade G. Muniz our provisional representative until an authorized conference takes place. We believe this is indispensable for the sake of a more precise expression of the point of view of the Latin American groups and sections.

We take this opportunity to throw the weight of our opinion against all split tendencies. Bolshevik democracy permits the minority the free defence of its positions within the Party.

Whatever position the National Convention may take, the Minority must not destroy the unity of the Party. The entire responsibility of the split will fall on it.

PARTIDO OBRERO INTERNACIONALISTA  
Mexican Section of the Fourth International

Mexico, D.F.  
March 10, 1940

(Signed)

G. Muniz  
O. Fernandez  
B. Alvarez  
A. Martinez

F. Zondejas (This comrade was unable to sign. He will send a separate letter).

(Translation)

(Copy to the International Executive Committee)

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REPLY OF COMRADE LEBRUN TO MEXICAN COMRADES

To the Committee of the Partido Obrero Internacionalists  
Mexican section of the Fourth International

Dear Comrades:

I apologize for not having answered sooner your letter of March 10th. The letter did not reach me until the 3th of April; that is, when the convention of the American Party was just ending. Furthermore, I have only just been able to obtain your address.

After having carefully read your letter, I decided to write you to express with complete frankness my disagreement with its contents. In view of my position on the question dividing the American Party, that is, the question of the defense of the USSR, you inform me that you can no longer consider me your representative to the I.E.C. But comrades, in making that decision you withdraw something you never gave me: credentials to represent you.

I have never claimed, nor claim now to represent any other Latin American section than the Brazilian. It was with the credentials of this section that I took part in the Founding Congress of the Fourth International in 1938.

I was elected to the I.E.C. by the delegates present at the International Congress and not by the different Latin American groups, not even the Brazilian. I have never received any mandate from any Latin-American group to represent it in the I.E.C. and certainly received none from the present Mexican group, the P.O.I., which didn't even exist at the time the International Congress took place. As you recall, the former Mexican section was dissolved and your movement was not reorganized until after a period of profound crisis which lasted many months and which forced the remaining Mexican comrades to begin again from the beginning.

The simple fact that I am Latin American did not give me the idea that I had some special powers to represent the Latin American sections in general, since I have always opposed the general tendency among the European and American comrades to consider Latin America as a simple uniform geographical expression. By this superficial and dangerous geographical criterion, which is at bottom a hang-over in our ranks of the prejudice and disdain of the great imperialist countries toward the colonial peoples and dependents, an Indo-Chinese comrade, for example, elected to the I.E.C., would thereby be the representative of the entire continent of Asia. It is therefore absurd and false to deduce from my birth certificate the right of being the mandated representative of all the Latin American sections and groups.

(Trans.-Letter of Lebrun to Mexican Section)

The comrades also protest that I did not consult them before expressing myself on the political differences being debated in the American section; and they ask with what right did I do so. Here, comrades, allow me to express my surprise at your conception of the rights of a delegate to an international organization. I believed you also recognized as contrary to democratic centralism the rule of instructed delegates; since when cannot a delegate to a convention or meeting change his mind and vote against the majority which chose him as its delegate? Does a member of an international organization not have a personal voice? Is he there solely to convey the point of view of the organization from which he comes? On this question I call your attention to the letter of comrade Rork written October 2, 1939 to the secretary of the American Party where he takes up precisely this question of instructed delegates. By your letter I presume you take a different position on this question from that of comrade Rork.

When the discussion on the question of defence of the USSR had already been going on for some time in the American Party, the I.E.C. decided to open the discussion on the same question in the International. This decision was taken in a meeting of the I.E.C. held the beginning of October. In November, Lebrun, as a member of the I.E.C. presented his document on this subject for consideration in the International. Had he not the right to do this? Was it not his right to defend the position he believed correct? Should he have kept silent or waited until you or the other Latin American comrades dictated his position to him? In that case his role in the I.E.C. would be only that of a loud-speaker for the Latin American comrades. If, in order to take a position on the questions arising in the I.E.C. I had first to consult the section from which I come or the other sections I am supposed to represent, why did you not call me to account when I took the position of the Rous fraction for the entry of the French section into the PSOP without having consulted you? Any other Latin American group could just as well have contested my right to take a position favoring the expulsion of the Galicia group without having first asked its authorization.

No, the Brazilian section did not authorize me to demand the revision of the slogan of "unconditional defence of the USSR". I took that position on my personal conviction. The Brazilian section, like all the others, has yet to declare itself on the discussion which has been opened and, on the basis of the documents of the two tendencies, to express its point of view and take a position. But it cannot withdraw my mandate as a member of the I.E.C. given me by the International Conference, that is, the highest body.

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Unfortunately the difficulties of communication, the long distances, and above all the prevailing conditions of illegality make full discussion in the Brazilian section more difficult than in any other Latin American group: This discussion cannot take place with the same facility as in Mexico. And getting documents through requires time and a great deal of luck. The odds are 3 to 1 that they will fail to arrive. Therefore, I ask the Mexican comrades to be good enough to wait until the Brazilian expresses its point of view.

The above considerations suffice to explain to you why I cannot accept the conceptions expressed in your letter which indicates a lack of understanding of the circumstances under which the factional struggle developed in the American Party and a certain distortion of the principle of democratic centralism. However, I persist in the hope that the leaders of the Mexican section will know how to find in this principle and in their revolutionary loyalty the necessary ways of honestly assuring the minority the right to express itself fully in the international organization. This is indispensable to the future of the Fourth International which is menaced by excessive anti-democratic tendencies and extreme centralization.

Revolutionary greeting,

LEBRUN

April 30, 1940

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LETTER OF MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

To all sections and groups of the Fourth International:

Dear Comrades:

We are writing you in the belief that already at this time you are acquainted with the situation which has been created in the American section and in the leading body of the International as a result of the faction fight around the question of the defence of the USSR in the present war.

The purpose of this letter is not, however, to acquaint you with all the events in this fight which were climaxed by the decisions of the special convention of the SWP. You will be informed of the latest developments following the convention by other means and other documents. The purpose of this letter is solely to inform you on the state of the international organization and its leadership as a consequence of the faction fight in the American section.

Already at the beginning of the fight, in October of last year, the IEC adopted a resolution to open the discussion on the question of the defence of the USSR in the International. (Up to the present we do not know whether the administrative secretary of the IEC has informed you of this decision). The resolution of the IEC was based upon the fact that throughout the International the same problems were being posed, revolving principally around the role of the USSR in the war. The IEC, believing justly that it would be better to allow the comrades to freely express themselves on this question rather than hinder all discussion by an abrupt decision, (apparently fixed but not corresponding to the sentiments of the majority of the comrades) preferred to itself take the initiative in opening the discussion. Moreover, it was the experience of the fight which had already begun in the American Party which led the IEC to make this decision: Comrade Cannon had at first wished to throttle all discussion on the question of the USSR on the pretext that the question had already been settled for all time by the Founding Congress of the International in 1938, and that nothing had changed since. This bureaucratic attempt to prevent discussion upon such a burning question as that of the role of the USSR in the war had succeeded only in embittering the right from its beginning. The IEC wished to prevent precisely this and to guide the discussion along sane and normal channels.

As a result of this resolution, Lebrun presented a document on the question of the defence of the USSR for international discussion. It was established at that time that the majority of the comrades of the IEC living in the United States and authorized by a decision of September of the year before to replace the former I.S. as the leading and executive body of the International, was in favor of the revision of the slogan of "unconditional defence of the USSR", and took the position

of defeatism in both camps in the Russo-Polish war and in the eventuality of a Russo-Finnish war.

As soon as it became evident that the majority of the functioning I.E.C. opposed the slogan of "unconditional defence of the USSR", the representatives of the Majority of the American section in the I.E.C. began to evince an almost complete lack of interest in the functioning of the I.E.C. Lebrun, for example, who was forced to leave New York in October for financial reasons, was left in complete ignorance of everything relating to the life of the I.E.C. In spite of a decision of the I.E.C. that he was to be notified of the meetings of this organization, he never even received the minutes of the meetings from the administrative secretary of the I.E.C., one of the right-hand men of comrade Cannon, the leader of the Majority fraction in the SWP. It wasn't for nothing that he held the Minority position on the question of the USSR! One can say openly that the meetings of the I.E.C. began to be deliberately sabotaged by the Majority comrades, comrade Stuart having completely given up his functions to devote himself entirely to the faction fight.

This has been confirmed in an obvious manner by the letter of comrade Rork sent to the secretary of the American Party on March 4th where he states in a post-script that the I.E.C. has ceased to exist. During this time all the attempts made by the undersigned to call a meeting of the I.E.C. were fruitless. A month after Rork's letter, during the convention of the Party, the Majority presented a report signed by comrade Stevens on the international organization communicating the fact that an international conference had been convoked to elect a new I.E.C.! The members of the I.E.C. knew nothing about this conference!

Moreover, the statutes of the Fourth International are very precise: international congresses and conferences are to be convoked under ordinary conditions by the I.E.C. and specially by one third of the national sections. According to the communication of the Majority, the new conference will be convoked by the American, Mexican and Canadian sections.

Thus, for purely factional reasons the statutes approved by the Foundation Congress were violated in two ways: 1) The I.E.C. is declared non-existent. Who so declared it? Comrade Rork. By what authority? By his personal authority. Why? Because the majority of the I.E.C. was not in agreement with him. 2) In dispensing with the rights of the I.E.C. and the organizational statutes of the International the Cannonite majority, considering itself to have supreme rights over the International, convokes a "pan-American" conference to elect a new international "leadership" to its taste. Thus, the Fourth International has no statutes, no organic law, no organizational structure except when they agree with the interests or desires of the leadership of the S.W.P. and comrade Rork. The Mexican and Canadian groups are included only to give a collective appearance to the personal decisions of comrade Cannon and comrade Rork. The leadership of the Mexican and Canadian groups are not acquainted with what has been going on in the American section nor



with the situation in the I.E.C. Their actions are based on their personal respect for comrade Rork.

But the calling of this "international conference" is not only evidence of the complete lack of respect for the organic law of the International. In acting in this manner, the leadership of the SWP in full control of the apparatus and material resources and certain of the authority of comrade Rork, shows that it does not consider the leading organizations elected at the international Congress autonomous bodies, capable of exercising their administrative and political functions. When this leadership finds itself in the minority in these organizations it does not hesitate to sabotage, resorts to little coups d'etat to liquidate them and replace those comrades disagreeing with it with others who seem more docile at the time. By a factional decision of comrade Rork and comrade Cannon, the four undersigned comrades have been excluded in spite of the fact that the statutes of the organization plainly state that comrades on the I.E.C. can be removed by the sections from which they come only if their removal is approved by two-thirds of the members of the I.E.C. itself. These precautionary measures were incorporated in the statutes to guarantee a certain stability to the I.E.C., by guaranteeing it the possibility of an autonomous existence and by giving its members the ability to act as members of the leading international organization and not exclusively as simply delegates of changing majorities of their national sections. That would make impossible any real organizational existence on the international scale.

But the violation of democratic centralism is even more shocking. Not content with bureaucratically depriving the majority of the I.E.C. of any possibility of intervention, of expression of its points of view in the international, the I.E.C. is a priori denied the possibility of adopting a position contrary to the point of view of the Majority of the American section and comrade Rork on the question of the defence of the USSR. The secret and hasty calling of this "conference" actually has as its purpose to prevent the national sections from having the necessary time to be able to acquaint themselves with all the aspects of the discussion in the American section and of expressing themselves on the question under discussion with complete knowledge of both sides. The purpose is to confront all the national sections and groups with a fait accompli no more discussion in the International since the "international" conference, the highest body, has already met and settled the question by reaffirming the old slogan of "unconditional defence of the USSR"! The sections and groups attempting to re-open the discussion or adopt a different position will then be threatened with expulsion. This bureaucratic procedure stifles and sabotages any real discussion on an international scale and does away with internal democracy. Already the falsified report of comrade Stevens on the situation in the international organization presented to the convention of the American party had for its purpose the preparation of the way for this manoeuvre and the justification in advance of the forthcoming resolution of the so-called "Pan-American conference".

His report gave the impression that the discussion had already taken place internationally and that the national sections and groups unanimously and with full knowledge of both sides of the question had come out for the position of the Majority of the American Party; that is, for unconditional defence.

We denounced this dishonest manoeuvre at the convention of the American Party, demonstrating that in the majority of the cases the statements of the national groups and sections dated from before the war or were only the preliminary majority expressions of the national leaderships, taken before the discussion had been extended to the ranks of the organizations. Here, as well, at the beginning of the internal discussion the leading bodies of the SWP had declared themselves as a majority for retaining the official slogan for the defence of the USSR. But that did not represent the expression of the entire organization and certainly not the unanimity of the Party. These preliminary decisions of the leading bodies do not dispense with the necessity for a thorough-going discussion in the ranks of the local organizations.

Why do the partisans of unconditional defence wish at all costs to prevent the ranks of the national organizations of the other countries from openly discussing as important a problem as the role of the USSR in this war, and discussing it after having full knowledge of the most representative documents of the two opposing tendencies? Because they fear that the ranks of the Fourth International will express themselves as in agreement with the Minority position; because they fear that a large section of the International may adopt a position identical with that of the Minority of the American Party. They wish to cut off any possibility of such an eventuality. Therefore they prefer, hastily, illegally, in an anti-democratic manner, to call a conference which has nothing international about it except its name. By this completely dishonest "conference" they wish to stifle the voice of any Minority tendency, of any internal opposition; they wish to scare the comrades loyal to the banner of the Fourth International with an unshakable resolution.

We believe it our duty to denounce these methods as absolutely destructive to the development of our international organization; we are convinced that no revolutionary international will ever be built with such methods borrowed from the arsenal of the Stalinist and reformist bureaucracies.

We protest the calling of the conference under such conditions, a conference which will be absolutely factional and in no sense representative either of the local sections and groups or the clear-cut expression of the wish of the International. This conference has only one purpose: to confirm the split in the ranks of the Fourth International in the United States, by the bureaucratic expulsion of almost half of the Party and the great majority of the Youth - that is - actually a majority of the American comrades.

It can only be a repetition of the two so-called "Pan-American" and "All American and Pacific" conferences held in 1933; the first at Mexico with Rivera and two leaders of the American Party, and

the other at New York with these same leaders, two former comrades of the American Party who speak Spanish and other American comrades who had been in China or were known for their interest in international problems, especially those of the Far East. Not a single authentic Latin American section or group was represented there. All the Latin American comrades know this and many of them have had the occasion to protest against such masquerades. In the "conference" to be held nothing will be changed.

They have even excluded from this so-called conference the four Minority members of the I.E.C.. Comrade Lebrun, authentic representative of an authentic Latin American group, which in spite of all difficulties has existed since 1929 and which has succeeded in creating a "Trotskyist" current in the proletarian movement of the country as a permanent phenomenon, which has the traditions of genuine class-struggle well-known among the advanced-guard and the advanced workers, is systematically excluded from the conference because he takes the Minority position.

It is against these facts and dangerous precedents that we protest to you, comrades. We must end such methods in our ranks; we do not play with big words but it is impossible to deny that here we have the germ of Stalinism which can develop and kill the Fourth International in embryo if we do not strike against it in time.

What must be done? We must protest against these bureaucratic manoeuvres and these masquerade conferences. Demand the calling of an international of Pan-American conference honestly prepared and with the possibility of the participation not only of the members of the former I.E.C. but genuine and authentic representatives of the principal groups of Latin America and elsewhere. A conference which can be preceded by a free and loyal international discussion with serious guarantees that the dissenting minority voices will be heard. Do not allow our International to be discredited by conferences manipulated by factional majorities. Demand the presence at this conference not only of the Minority members of the I.E.C. but also of the Workers Party. This is the only way to save the Fourth International from disintegration and stagnation.

If you agree with our protest and demands, send us your mandates to represent you even in their conference so that we may go there to demand respect for proletarian democracy in our ranks.

Against bureaucratic methods; guard against the contagion of Stalinism; for internal democracy and revolutionary discipline in organizational loyalty.

Revolutionary greetings,  
Majority of the I.E.C.

Lebrun  
Johnson  
Trent  
Anton

April 25, 1940

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LETTER BY I.E.C. MEMBERS

May 15, 1940

J. Stuart  
116 University Pl.  
New York, New York

Dear Comrade:

In view of the fact that the convention of the Socialist Workers Party, in collaboration with the Canadian and Mexican sections of the Fourth International, decided to call a special International Conference, we hereby request that the undersigned, who as regularly elected members of the International Executive Committee are entitled to attend all international gatherings, be notified in time, of the time and place and agenda of the contemplated conference, so that they may be able to prepare to take part in it.

We can be reached in care of Comrade Max Shachtman, at 114 West 14th St.

Fraternally,

Signed - Lebrun,  
Johnston  
Trent  
Anton

Per Max Shachtman

MS:MS

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LETTER BY THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE OF THE WORKERS PARTY

May 15, 1940

J. Stuart  
116 University Pl.  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Comrade:

By decision of the Political Committee of the Workers Party, Section of the Fourth International, I am authorized to request you to inform us of the time, place, and agenda of the International Conference which the recent convention of the Socialist Workers Party, in collaboration with the Canadian and Mexican Sections, decided to convoke.

The Workers Party, despite its views on the manner in which the contemplated conference was convoked, is desirous of sending delegates who can participate in the conference in what, in our view, are the best interests of the Fourth International.

Fraternally yours,

Max Shachtman  
National Secretary

MS:MS

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