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**RELATIONS WITH TROTSKYIST ORGANIZATIONS,
OR GROUPS CLAIMING TO BE TROTSKYIST,
WHICH ARE OUTSIDE OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL**

[The following two motions were adopted by the majority of the United Secretariat at its July 3-4, 1976, meeting.]

1. A period of upturn of world revolution such as the present is inevitably accompanied by ferment amongst the vanguard of the working class and a period of recomposition, splits and fusions of the organizations of the working class. As regards organizations on the left wing of the workers movement such a period inevitably creates a new differentiation with groups which previously stood on centrist positions differentiating under the impact of events and with some of them moving more clearly into the camp of reformism, while others approach closer to the positions of revolutionary Marxism. Within the revolutionary forces a similar differentiation occurs with certain forces which were previously within a revolutionary framework moving towards centrism while others acquire more consistent, and therefore more Trotskyist, revolutionary positions.

2. Those forces which claim to adhere to Trotskyism are no more immune from the above process than any others. Each phase of the upsurge of the world revolution has brought a new differentiation amongst forces within or approaching the positions of Trotskyism. Thus following the Cuban revolution there developed simultaneously the approach of many new forces towards the Fourth International, and towards Trotskyism, and the development of other forces either away from the Fourth International or away from the positions of Trotskyism altogether. In the period since 1968 we have seen a similar development with many new forces and organizations approaching Trotskyism and the Fourth International, while other forces have moved further away from Trotskyism and the International.

3. Such a process of recomposition and ferment inevitably affects not merely the Fourth International itself but also forces which historically have stood on the platform of Trotskyism but which have, for various objectively incorrect reasons, remained outside the International. Certain of these forces have moved under the impact of great events to the point of a definitive break with Trotskyism and their emergence as clearly centrist organizations (e.g., the Militant group, a previous section of the Fourth International, which since 1968 has moved to the point where it now explicitly envisages the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism in Britain). Other forces have undergone a deep crisis as a result of the struggle between Trotskyist and non-Trotskyist positions in the face of great events, e.g., the positions of the WRP as a whole have clearly moved away from Trotskyism but a split of forces moving closer towards the International

than any position of Healy since 1963 has developed (WSL); within the centrist Militant group a revolutionary opposition developed which fused forces with those of the International. Other organizations which despite various incorrect positions nevertheless clearly remained Trotskyist are now prepared to enter into more serious discussions than prior to 1968 with the International (Lutte Ouvrière, ex-I.S. forces, the Chartists). There is every chance that, with the still more powerful development of the revolution, in particular in Europe, such processes will continue and intensify. As part of the more general question of the regroupment of revolutionary forces the Fourth International must intervene in this process to regroup with those forces which are clearly Trotskyist and to intensify the differentiation within those forces which retain contradictory positions or which have clearly broken with Trotskyism but which, from reasons of historical origin and self-characterisation, nevertheless contain clearly Trotskyist forces.

4. In determining relations with these currents, the International must be guided by the following chief considerations.

(i) A clear re-affirmation of its positions that all forces standing on the programme of revolutionary Marxism should be united within a single democratic centralist International and the re-affirmation of the right of all such forces to form tendencies and factions within the International.

(ii) A clear re-affirmation that agreement with the current line or leadership of the International, or with any of the tendencies or factions within the International, is in no sense a pre-condition for membership of the Fourth International, and that the sole conditions for this are adherence to the programme of revolutionary Marxism and acceptance of the democratic centralist framework of the International and its national sections.

(iii) That while national sections have the right to determine tactics towards national revolutionary organizations in their countries this does not prevent the International leading bodies from making strong recommendations to them regarding the line of action which should be pursued.

(iv) That in the case of international organizations, relations with these fall within the scope of determination by International leading bodies.

5. In determining relations with all political forces, including those which are Trotskyist or which claim to be Trotskyist, the Fourth International must be guided not by subjective impressions but by objective political characterizations. It is necessary to clearly distinguish between those forces which we characterize as revolutionary and those we do not, and between those forces which characterize the Fourth International as revolutionary and Trotsky-

ist and those who do not, and in each case our tactics and relations must reflect this fact and situation. Thus, for example, in the case of forces which we characterize as revolutionary and Trotskyist, and which in turn characterize the Fourth International as Trotskyist (Lutte Ouvrière, Chartists, etc.) it is necessary to clearly explain that no principled basis exists for the separation of their forces from the Fourth International and in line with this we have to attempt to involve these forces as closely as possible, without obliterating the distinction between members and non-members of the International, in the life of the FI and thereby aim to break down their objectively sectarian separation; in the case of currents which define the International as non-Trotskyist (OCRFI, on certain statements ICL) or even as counter-revolutionary, it is necessary to attempt to win these forces from their incorrect characterizations and positions but nevertheless to note that their characterizations entail an attempt to destroy, split or disrupt the International and therefore we cannot with them enter into the same form of relations as with currents characterizing us as Trotskyists and which we also characterize as Trotskyist.

SPECIFIC CASES

Within the general guidelines outlined above the following specific cases apply—in the case of national organizations claiming to Trotskyism these positions to be taken as strong recommendations of the United Secretariat to the national sections involved and in the case of international organizations these positions to be taken as the decision of the United Secretariat to be applied by the national sections.

6. Lutte Ouvrière;

The general question of Lutte Ouvrière is dealt with separately under the item of correspondence with the United Secretariat concerning their letter to us. In addition to the proposals contained herein, the United Secretariat requests the French Section to agree that Lutte Ouvrière should be invited to the conferences of the national sections of the International. The United Secretariat should supply Lutte Ouvrière, subject to conditions of non-publication, with the International Discussion Bulletin and should consider the question of Lutte Ouvrière making a submission to the discussion for the next World Congress.

A similar procedure should be adopted in relation to the other organizations which share the general political positions of Lutte Ouvrière and maintain various loose relations with it.

7. Various British Trotskyist Organizations;

There are a large number of organizations claiming to Trotskyism in Britain. Along the criteria outlined above however we may distinguish the following broad categories.

(i) Organizations which *prima facie* must be characterized as revolutionary and which regard the Fourth International as a revolutionary organization (Workers League, Chartists, League for Socialist Action). To these currents we should seek to maintain the same essential

relations as outlined with Lutte Ouvrière above, i.e., we should seek to involve them in the activity of the International, invite them to conferences of the sections, supply them with the International Discussion Bulletin subject to the usual conditions, discuss their making a submission to the discussion for the World Congress. The United Secretariat strongly recommends the IMG to adopt this policy and to make recommendations as to the exact tactics and time scale in this process—it would appear that such a procedure could be implemented immediately in the case of the Chartists while in other cases, while we work towards this goal, the first contacts necessary to move towards this stage have not yet been achieved (e.g., Workers League, League for Socialist Action).

Within this general category, but posed in a slightly different tactical way, is the case of the Workers Socialist League. While this should be clearly characterized by us as a Trotskyist organization it maintains a slightly different relation towards us than the other currents previously mentioned—stating simply that it will not prejudge in advance of discussion whether the Fourth International is a Trotskyist organization or not. However, as it clearly does not characterize the International as “counter-revolutionary,” “destroyers of Trotskyism,” etc., as do the WRP and OCRFI, we should maintain the same essential framework of relations with the WSL as with the other groups mentioned in this section—although with certain greater tactical reservations to guard our organization against unfortunate sectarian moves, such as have occurred recently with the WSL in relation to the IMG, which can flow from the characterizations given by the WSL of the Fourth International.

(ii) An organization, the International Communist League (ICL), which should be characterized as Trotskyist but which maintains strongly contradictory characterizations of the Fourth International—characterizing it even within the same documents as the “mainstream of Trotskyism” and as not being Trotskyist and having betrayed the Trotskyist programme in favor of Brandlerism. The nature of this contradiction, and the tactics to be pursued in relation it, must be more closely determined by the IMG but for the moment we cannot enter into the same type of relations with the ICL as with the organizations in point 7 i.

(iii) Organizations which clearly have degenerated to centrism (Militant) or ultra-sectarian positions (WRP). In these cases not merely do these organizations characterize the Fourth International as non-Trotskyist and adjust their practical relations accordingly, but they show no interest whatever in discussions with the FI. While we should anticipate splits from these organizations in the direction of Trotskyism, and should pay careful attention to any such developments, there is nothing to be gained at present by attempting to enter into discussions with these organizations as a whole.

8. The Revolutionary Marxist Organizing Committee (RMOC);

The RMOC is *prima facie* separated by no programmatic principles from the Fourth International. The obstacle on its side to its being in fraternal solidarity with the Fourth International, is its characterization of the Socialist Workers Party (which is prevented from being a section of

the Fourth International by reactionary legislation) as reformist/centrist/bureaucratically degenerated, etc., characterizations which preclude it from having a principled basis for carrying out the democratic centralist discipline of the SWP. As long as it maintains such characterizations this clearly prevents it from being members of the SWP. The task of the forces of the Fourth International must be to persuade it to abandon these false characterizations and thereby create a basis for these cdes joining the SWP.

While tactics towards the RMOC are determined by the SWP, the United Secretariat strongly recommends that the SWP seek to overcome the sectarian and false characterizations given by the RMOC of the SWP, by explaining in a fraternal way that such characterizations are incompatible with membership in the SWP, but that they are wholly false and attempt to allay in every way possible the false positions on these issues taken by the RMOC.

9. The OCRFI;

The OCRFI differs from the majority of the organizations outlined above in two crucial respects:

(a) It is an international organization and relations and tactics with respect to it therefore fall under the control of the leading bodies of the International and not of the national sections.

(b) It clearly characterizes the Fourth International not as a Trotskyist, but as a counter-revolutionary organization, as the destroyers of Trotskyism, etc.

Relations with the OCRFI, reflecting these facts, will therefore necessarily differ from those with the majority of the organizations dealt with above. The line of action which follows from this for the International and its national sections is the following:

(i) In addition to its general political characterizations a number of relatively autonomous factors are of importance in dealing with the OCRFI. In particular the issue of violence within the workers movement raises basic principles of programme. The United Secretariat, or its appropriate sections, should continue to participate, or decide to participate, in the commission to investigate the facts of this in relation to the Varga affair. In the event that these allegations are substantiated, any relations and discussion with the OCRFI must be predicated on a correction of its positions on this question.

(ii) Apart from the violence question, and the issue of lack of democracy within the OCRFI which would become important if any discussions involving the rank and file were arrived at, a central fact on which clarity has to be achieved in relation to the OCRFI at present is the contradiction between the fact that on the one hand they make approaches to the Fourth International for discussion—even talking of accepting the discipline of the outcome of a democratic discussion—and on the other hand they continue to advance characterizations which could only lead to the conclusion that their aim could only be to split or destroy the Fourth International, e.g., that the United Secretariat is the “destroyer of the Fourth International,” that “Pabloism destroyed the Fourth International through adaptation to Stalinism in 1953.” The aim which has to be achieved is to resolve this contradiction—optimally through getting them to change their characterization, and bring it into line with their approaches, and thereby create the possibility of a different type of discussion and different type of organiza-

tional relations, or, in case that they are engaged in a maneuver, to show without any confusion that their leaders do continue to hold in the old way the well known positions they have expressed since 1963. In this latter case, however, a discussion can still be useful in that we may hope to influence or win to the International, sections of their ranks who, not understanding the cynical maneuvers of the leadership, would have taken the approach, and the implicit characterization such an approach contains, as good coin and were prepared for a discussion among revolutionaries. The characterizations which the OCRFI continues to advance therefore do not constitute a reason for not entering into political discussions with them at the present time, but merely determine the form and content of these discussions.

(c) The first way in which the characterizations which continue to be given by the OCRFI affect the form and content of this discussion is that these characterizations make it quite clear that, on their present statements, the OCRFI, if they acted on any principles, could not be loyal members of the Fourth International but could only aim to split or destroy it. This means, firstly, that as long as they continue to advance these characterizations it is excluded that they could be members of the Fourth International or its national sections, and, secondly, that no assertion about their accepting democratic centralism on the basis of a discussion could be taken as meaningful at present. This fact must be clearly stated to them—not as a threat but in order to pose clearly the need for them to understand the contradiction in their position and the necessity for them to make an unequivocal and clear characterization of a different character. One of the aims in political discussion in the context of general issues of politics and programme should be to show them the meaning of this type of political characterization and its implications and determining the significance of issues of politics and programme which still separate them from the positions of the International.

(d) The political characterizations they also give, at this stage, prevents them from participating in the discussion in preparation for the 11th World Congress—it is impossible to allow someone to participate in a discussion to determine the line of action for the Fourth International to build itself, when the aim of the organization requesting that participation could only be, if consistent with its stated characterizations, not to discuss how the International may be most effectively built but must be to destroy, damage or split the International. This means that any discussions with the OCRFI, unless of course their position were to alter, must be kept separate from the discussion for the preparation of the 11th World Congress. Such a discussion should be organized initially through an exchange at a leadership level. At a later stage, if progress were made in this exchange, it would be possible to organize a more general discussion through separate bulletins or documents from those of the World Congress discussion. Any such bulletins or documents would be under the control and editorship of the United Secretariat—which should however explicitly recognize that the discussion would be aided if minorities in the International, and in the OCRFI, were able to state their position.

(e) The characterizations which the OCRFI make of the Fourth International also determine the content of what

should be discussed at this stage—it could not be on tactical questions, etc., which presume a programmatic agreement, and at least the possibility of a common organization, but must centre on the chief political and programmatic questions in the world revolution in relation to the OCRFI and the FI. Going forward to a different type of discussion would of course be determined by what progress was made in these exchanges.

(f) Within this framework the International would discuss, involving those sections most directly affected, the various other issues raised by relations with the OCRFI, e.g., the exact line to pursue on the violence question; the character of the political attacks made by the OCRFI on national sections of the International; the issues of joint work of a generalized character, etc.

(g) The United Secretariat, in collaboration with the sections of the International, would discuss and, within the terms of the statutes, determine the various issues of tactics vis a vis the OCRFI. The United Secretariat should urge all international leaders to call for sections to as far as possible, and even where it may not be statutorily necessary, to strive to bring their tactics within the positions decided by the U. Sec. so as to allow the most unified response possible to the OCRFI. This would involve joint collaboration and discussion in relation to

these questions. This is of course in addition to areas which the statutes of the International allow the United Secretariat and other leading bodies to decide on the line which should be pursued in relation to the OCRFI.

(h) The first text in discussion with the OCRFI would be on why the Fourth International exists, the correctness of the reunification of 1963, the principled character of this unity and therefore why the Fourth International does not consider the principled political basis exists for a split today. This document, and any reply of the OCRFI, would be circulated in the first place at a leadership level of the International.

(i) A letter should be sent to the OCRFI, and a meeting held with its representative, to inform them of the contents of this decision and the conclusions which flow from it.

General organizations steps

10. (i) This resolution should be printed in the IIDB.

(ii) For use in relations with all these organizations, and in particular in the fight against sectarian deviations, material dealing with historical and theoretical questions of splits and unifications in the history of the communist movement should be carried in the International press.

* * *

The United Secretariat notes the invitations sent by the SWP to the OCRFI and various national Trotskyist organizations to attend the convention of the SWP. The United Secretariat further notes that invitations to the convention are regarded by the SWP as a political act as it does not merely not invite but excludes Spartacists, Healyites, and others who are political attackers of the SWP and aim to damage it.

The United Secretariat further notes that in this political act the SWP chooses not to invite an organization such as the RMOG, which politically attacks the SWP, but does choose to invite forces such as the OCRFI who attack the majority of the sections of the International as counter-revolutionary, the destroyers of Trotskyism, and separated by an unbridgeable gap from the Transitional Programme.

Finally we note the exposure of the hollow claims of the SWP leadership to be the protectors of the rights of national sections against a supposedly “super-centralist” international majority and international centre. In addition to open violation of the decision of the United Secretariat on relations with the OCRFI, an international organization with which the United Secretariat has the full right to regulate relations of sections, the SWP now carries out open violation of the right of the national sections to determine tactical relations with groups in their own countries.

This violation by the SWP of the rights of national sections is one on which it is not possible to make any compromise. For the very same reason that the United Secretariat defends the right of leading bodies of the International to determine relations with an international organization such as the OCRFI, we defend the right of the IMG to define what tactical relations will be pursued in relation to the WSL, of the LCR to determine what tactical relations will be pursued with Lutte Ouvrière, etc. The two rights, of international bodies to determine general line

and relations with international organizations, and of the rights of national sections to determine tactics, including tactics towards national political organizations, are part of an integrated concept of international democratic centralism. The SWP on this issue is revealed as just as much a violator of the right of national sections to determine tactics as it is of the rights of international leading bodies.

We may further note the lack of that famous “collaboration” with which the SWP acts. The SWP was fully aware that on the agenda of this United Secretariat the issue of relations with various groups claiming to Trotskyism was to be discussed. It prefers not to participate in this discussion to persuade cdes but to present accomplished facts to pre-empt this discussion. It made no attempt whatever to even pretend to ask national sections the tactics that should be pursued towards these national organizations. It was aware that in many cases agreement in their attending the SWP convention, and that of other sections of the International or organizations in fraternal solidarity with the International, would have been achieved. The SWP’s failure to ask corresponds to only one aim—that is simply wished to violate the right of national sections to determine what tactical relations will be pursued towards organizations in their own country.

The United Secretariat, faced with such an attack on its own right to regulate relations with organizations and of the right of sections to determine tactics towards national organizations, must necessarily take a clear position of principle.

i. In line with the resolution voted at this meeting the United Secretariat does not agree to place the OCRFI, which characterizes the International as counter-revolutionary and attacks our sections accordingly, to be placed on the same footing as organizations, such as Lutte Ouvrière, who, despite many political differences with us, nevertheless characterize the Fourth International and its

sections as Trotskyist and revolutionary and, consistent with this characterization, conduct many joint campaigns with us and maintain wholly different relations with us than the OCRFI. It recommends in the strongest possible terms that the OCRFI should not be invited to the SWP Convention.

ii. In relation to national Trotskyist organizations the United Secretariat re-affirms the right of national sections to determine tactics towards national organizations in their country. The United Secretariat recommends in the strongest possible terms that the SWP ask all relevant national sections whether they agree to the named organizations in their country attending the SWP convention. On receipt of this request the United Secretariat recommends the national sections to agree to those organizations attending the SWP convention which are specified in the text passed at this Secretariat and to reject

the others. In each case however the Secretariat recommends in the strongest possible terms that the SWP invitation will be decided by the decision of the national section concerned.

iii. The United Secretariat requests the SWP to invite also other currents which the national sections propose should be invited.

iv. The United Secretariat recommends in the strongest possible terms that a closed session should be held on this item at the SWP convention.

v. To inform the membership of the SWP of this resolution the United Secretariat recommends in the strongest possible terms that this text be placed in the internal bulletin of the SWP.

vi. This resolution will be circulated to all sections concerned and to the SWP.

Statement by Livio

In regard to the characterizations of the SWP attributed to RMOC in the resolution on regroupment adopted by the United Secretariat at its meeting of July, as a member of the United Secretariat present at the founding conference of the RMOC, I would like to point out that the conference did not characterize the SWP as reformist or centrist. Moreover, such a characterization would have been in contradiction with the decision made by the conference to ask the SWP leadership to admit the RMOC comrades into the party on the basis of their commitment to respect the party's discipline.

September 12, 1976

**STATEMENT OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE OF THE
SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY ON THE OBJECTIONS RAISED
TO INVITING THE OCRFI TO OBSERVE THE 1976 CONVENTION**

At the July 3-4, 1976, meeting of the United Secretariat, the majority adopted two motions jointly entitled "Relations With Trotskyist Organizations, or Groups Claiming to Be Trotskyist, Which Are Outside of the Fourth International."

Motion No. 1 deals with the criteria the majority of the United Secretariat have decided to follow in determining their attitude toward such groups. The motion offers a list of examples in Britain, France, the United States, and on the international level.

Motion No. 2 deals with the invitation extended to the OCRFI (Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International) to attend the open sessions of the coming convention of the SWP.

I.

While the first motion acknowledges that one of the problems now facing the Fourth International, its sections, and sympathizing organizations is the movement toward or away from Trotskyism induced in a series of groupings by the current upsurge of the world revolution, it insists that political attitudes toward them should be determined by *characterizing* their essential nature. While this appears at first sight to be a good way of proceeding, it is a one-sided and therefore false method.

A characterization of a grouping is useful to register its development at a certain point. In former times a characterization might remain valid for a long period. Today such bench marks can become outmoded rather quickly. In the political arena, the *trend of development* can acquire primary importance, for it means that a change is occurring that can lead to something qualitatively new.

This holds with special force in the task of building a mass revolutionary party. If a change in the trend of development of a political current is not properly assessed and responded to in time, a precious opportunity can be

missed.

How misleading it can be to rely on formal characterizations is shown in a specific case, which for unexplained reasons has been left out of the list compiled by the United Secretariat majority.

The case is the Tendance Marxiste-Révolutionnaire Internationale (TMRI—International Revolutionary Marxist Tendency) headed by Pablo, which entered the Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU—United Socialist party) in France and which now, with the recruits it has gained, constitutes the main component of its left wing. Leaders of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (the French section of the Fourth International) and of the International Majority Tendency (IMT) have been conducting conversations with the TMRI.

The initiative in this rapprochement was probably taken by Pablo. We do not know how far things have gone, since no written report of this move has been submitted to the United Secretariat, still less to the membership of the Fourth International.

In a letter to Ernest Mandel, dated February 11, 1976, Michel Pablo gave his impressions of a meeting held in Brussels. In an assessment of the European situation, "which we believe you share," Pablo "mentioned the case of France, where there is at present the PSU on one hand and on the other the LCR, which approached the PSU with a request to open discussions with a view to possible unification, a perspective we support."

This "possible unification," however, would take place "in the framework of a new organization that would not at the outset be part of any international formation, but would admit tendencies supporting the idea of joining one or another international organization at the proper time."

"We emphasized that on important questions of assessing situations and of tactics," Pablo continued, "we feel ourselves to be closer to the tendency known as 'European' but that we have no intention whatsoever of exploiting your internal differences, hoping rather that the Fourth

International as a whole will come to correct positions.” (See Appendix I.)

We do not know what reply was made to this letter, or what conferences have been held since.

Comrade Matti, a member of the Political Bureau of the LCR, voiced concern over the objectives of the Pablo grouping:

“Their plan vis-à-vis us is clear: they want to *build the party* with a section of the LCR and a section of the PSU, that is, explicitly, with what they believe to be the former tendencies 2 and 3 against tendencies 1 and 4 [tendencies in the LCR], and at the international level, they want to discuss with the IMT to the exclusion of the LTF and the SWP. Therefore their attitude is factional and their goal is to divide us: from this it follows that our main concrete response in regard to them is to steer the debate toward those questions they would like to see submerged, the questions of organizational strictness, the key question of the Fourth International and its achievements. These leaders of the opposition inside the PSU are not novices and adopting a ‘pedagogical’ attitude toward them is ruled out on this subject, where it is precisely they who are consciously attempting to maneuver. All work pushed forward with them should be defined in terms of this analysis. Which, once again, implies no sectarianism—just the opposite—in regard to all forms of common action and principled debate.” (For an English translation of the article, “After the ‘PH’ [Politique Hebdo] Article That Was Reproduced in Rouge,” see SWP *Internal Information Bulletin*, No. 8, July 1976.)

Aside from possible meetings in France or Belgium, Pablo held a meeting in London with the leadership of the IMG. Pablo said that his differences with the Fourth International were narrowing and that the French section should unify with the PSU.

It is to be noted that the IMG leaders met with Pablo on their own initiative and did not report to the United Secretariat until later. Fortunately, the IMG leaders were not assailed for violating the rules of democratic centralism because they met with Pablo. Such reactions are reserved for tendencies that hold points of political difference with the majority of the United Secretariat.

If the method of proceeding from characterizations, as laid down in the United Secretariat motion, had been observed, the negotiations with Pablo’s grouping would have been barred, including his meeting with the leadership of the IMG. In a declaration dated May 23, 1972, which was published in the May 26, 1972, issue of *l’internationale*, the TMRI stated that it was “abandoning” the claim it had hitherto made to adherence to the Fourth International and to Trotskyism.

Clearly, as an organization opposed to Trotskyism and the Fourth International, the TMRI meets none of the conditions set down in the motion passed by the majority of the United Secretariat that would permit a positive attitude to be adopted toward it.

Of course, the TMRI may have changed. It may have made a turn so that now it could be said to be moving in the direction of the Fourth International and of Trotskyism. If this were so, we would welcome the development.

However, up to now no evidence has been presented that such is the case. To the contrary, the March 1976 issue of *Sous le Drapeau du Socialisme* reprinted the May 23, 1972, declaration in toto and in a prominent way. The move was

made, no doubt, to indicate to its contacts in the PSU that it was not changing in its programmatic opposition to the Fourth International and Trotskyism.

As if to make sure that no one missed its political significance, the same statement was reprinted in the same prominent way for a second time in the May 1976 issue of *Sous le Drapeau du Socialisme*.

This clear reaffirmation of the TMRI’s anti-Trotskyist position would seem to make it all the more imperative for the majority of the United Secretariat to include this case among the many listed in their motion, along with their characterization of the TMRI and an explanation of how their opening of discussions with the TMRI accorded with that characterization.

The failure to do any of these things shows quite convincingly that the method followed in the motion is not applied by the majority of the United Secretariat in *all* cases but only in *some*, and that the choice is motivated by factional considerations.

II.

The incorrectness of proceeding on the basis of characterizations that leave out of account trends of development is shown in a different way in the handling of the case of the OCRFI. The motion leaves out the history of the OCRFI’s approach to the United Secretariat. That means leaving out the key facts that ought to determine our attitude toward the OCRFI.

All the correspondence and documents needed to form an objective judgment on this case were included as appendixes to Jack Barnes’s report to the 1975 convention of the SWP and were submitted to the *Internacional Internal Discussion Bulletin* (Vol. XII, No. 6, October 1975). To this day they have not been translated, to our knowledge, into French, Spanish, or any other language used by the sections of the Fourth International.

Still worse, when the English edition of this issue of the bulletin arrived in Britain, the leadership of the IMG cut out all the pages containing this factual material before distributing the issue to the membership. The action conformed to instructions from the majority of the United Secretariat, who claimed that they had not granted permission for the inclusion of this material as part of Jack Barnes’s report. The IMG leaders believed, mistakenly, that cutting out these pages was required by the rules of democratic centralism.

But they thereby participated with the majority of the United Secretariat in violating one of the basic principles on which democratic centralism rests—keeping the membership informed.

They themselves, of course, read the material before censoring it, and seem to have found it instructive. In fact, the IMG Political Committee voted on February 19, 1976, to send a letter to the United Secretariat protesting “in the strongest possible terms against the motivation contained in this resolution which introduces a new and unacceptable principle into organisational relations in the International. We refer to the statements which call for the deletion of the correspondence from this bulletin ‘in order to teach the international minority a lesson.’ This is quite unacceptable.”

The IMG’s letter included the correct observation that the “present motivation . . . attempts to introduce a

principle which is completely unacceptable and, which, if seriously defended, would cast into question the democratic norms and functioning of the International." (See Appendix II.)

Unfortunately the leadership of the IMG did not feel up to carrying their protest beyond the verbal level. When it came to action they obeyed the completely unacceptable new principle and "deleted" the pages proscribed by the majority of the United Secretariat.

Still another fact should be noted. The January 31, 1976, issue of the French edition of the *International Internal Discussion Bulletin* published Jack Barnes's report, but left out the summary, which had been approved for inclusion by the majority of the United Secretariat. The comrades in charge of getting out the French version said in an editorial note that the summary had "not yet been translated" but that it would appear in the next issue of the bulletin. When the "next" issue is scheduled for publication is a well-kept secret. A year has passed since the summary was given, and the members of the LCR have still not been able to read it.

The membership of the Fourth International have thus been kept in ignorance of the facts about the overture made by the OCRFI and the ups and downs of this move and the attitude of the United Secretariat toward it over the past three years.

Naturally this has facilitated the effort to put across a tendentious presentation of the nature of the OCRFI and the claim that this nature precludes anything but the most disdainful response to any positive steps the OCRFI may take. Suppression of the facts has also helped the IMT to justify the characterizations intended to bolster the argument that the political distance between the OCRFI and the United Secretariat is widening, not narrowing.

III.

The second motion adopted by the majority of the United Secretariat is an exposition on democratic centralism as it touches on the rights of the United Secretariat and the sections of the Fourth International in relation to discussions with leaders of the groups listed in the first motion, particularly the OCRFI, or with such actions as inviting them to observe the open sessions of the coming convention of the SWP.

The argumentation is based on fixed categories: the immutable character of democratic centralism, the immutable character of the OCRFI, the immutable character of the United Secretariat, and presumably the immutable character of the SWP (which allegedly "wished" to flout "collaboration" with the United Secretariat and "violate" the right of national sections "to determine what tactical relations will be pursued towards organizations in their own country"). However, this abstract line of argumentation simply obscures the concrete problem, which is the default in leadership displayed by the majority of the United Secretariat in its handling of the overtures of the OCRFI.

To understand what is involved, it is necessary to know the main facts as they developed—precisely those facts presented in the appendixes to Jack Barnes's report in the *International Internal Discussion Bulletin* that were censored by the majority of the United Secretariat. Here is a brief outline:

1. In a letter dated May 28, 1973, the OCRFI asked to participate in the discussion preparatory to the Tenth World Congress, scheduled to be held in 1974, and to participate in the congress "with the status of observer."

Thus, *more than three years ago*, the OCRFI took the initiative of trying to open a discussion on past and present differences.

2. The United Secretariat replied in a letter dated July 16, 1973. The letter rejected the OCRFI's bid to open a discussion, citing the following grounds:

(a) The contradiction between "the numerous slanderous attacks you have publicly hurled against our movement and its members" and the fact that "you seem to forget the slanders you hurled behind the scenes in order to place yourself on the plane of political differences which could be normally debated."

The letter stated that this "would constitute an altogether laudable step forward on your part if, at the same time, you publicly disavowed the slanderous attacks you repeatedly spread against the Trotskyist organizations you were politically separated from."

(b) The "splittist objective" of the OCRFI's approach. "The debate which you want to conduct you are entitled to carry on through your press; we will respond there in the manner we judge most appropriate for us. But there is no question of according you the platform of the World Congress to aid your splittist undertaking."

Nonetheless the letter from the OCRFI represented such a change in attitude that the possibility could not be ruled out that the OCRFI was motivated by a desire to strengthen the world Trotskyist movement. Consequently a paragraph was added stating that the United Secretariat was "ready to reexamine this decision if you alter your splittist objectives, if you publicly agree to recognize and implement the decisions of the World Congress, as outlined in the current statutes of the International, and if your activity conforms to such a change in orientation."

3. The OCRFI replied in a letter dated October 10, 1973. Acknowledgment was made of the "sharp character of the factional struggle" that began in 1950. The foremost reason for the "violence of the polemics," however, was the undemocratic "expulsion of the majority of the P.C.I. [the French section] from the International" in 1952. "Moreover, the use of 'certain characterizations' was not a 'unilateral' practice, for we can readily list numerous insinuations and statements you hurled against us which could easily be labelled 'slanderous.'"

On the question of their motives in seeking to break down the old factional walls, the letter pointed out that the OCRFI could hardly be held accountable for the splits in Canada, Argentina, Spain, and the older ones in France, Germany, Latin America, Italy, and elsewhere that had affected the ranks of sections adhering to the United Secretariat.

"The aim of our proposal," continued the OCRFI, "was and remains to assure the theoretical clarification of problems, in order to rise above the sectarian, opportunist and ultraleft-adventurist deviations, which reflect the pressure of hostile class forces, the Stalinist bureaucracy and reformism on the organizations claiming to adhere to the Fourth International."

In face of the rejection of their proposal, the OCRFI made a new one:

(a) To write several documents on the role of the

national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie in oppressed countries as contributions to the balance sheet of the struggle for the Fourth International in Latin America. The OCRFI proposed that these documents be considered as a contribution to the Tenth Congress.

(b) The OCRFI said that it was "going to publish the draft report on building Revolutionary Parties in Western Europe that you are submitting to your Tenth Congress. The O.C.I. is preparing a document on this question."

(c) That "these documents be circulated in the ranks of the organizations affiliated to the United Secretariat, as contributions to the Tenth Congress. Similarly we pledge to make available to the membership of the organizations affiliated to the Organizing Committee all documents and contributions that in your opinion should be brought to the attention of our members."

(d) In addition, the OCRFI stated that "on the basis of a broad and complete international discussion which alone can create the grounds for defining clear political positions and accomplishing practical tasks in the reconstructed Fourth International, we are prepared to abide by democratic centralism."

4. The United Secretariat read this letter with considerable interest. Whatever reservations some of its members might have held as to the motives of the OCRFI, it was agreed that it would be a political mistake to simply disregard or flatly reject this new overture, which included acceptance of the rules of democratic centralism. The correct course required, at a minimum, *testing* the overture.

It was therefore decided *unanimously* to write a friendly letter to the OCRFI, indicating a positive response, but deferring doing anything concrete about opening a discussion until after the Tenth Congress. A leader of the French section was designated to write this letter.

Unfortunately, the letter was never written. The comrade never reported back on his assignment.

If the stand taken in the July 3-4, 1976, motions of the United Secretariat had been applied in that instance what would have been said?

Quite a lecture could have been given on the violation of the rules of democratic centralism. A unanimous decision of the United Secretariat had been flagrantly sabotaged. The representatives of the French section had approved writing a favorable response to the OCRFI. Thus the rights of the French section had been flouted. On both an international and national level, the right of the majority to decide on and carry out an action had been violated. A serious breach of discipline had occurred.

Of course, the majority of the United Secretariat never took such a stand. This is understandable since the person involved was one of the leaders of the IMT. The rules of democratic centralism apply equally to all, we are told; but, it seems, more equally to some than to others.

5. It was not until September 1974 that the Political Committee of the SWP learned that the OCRFI had never received a reply from the United Secretariat to their proposals of October 10, 1973. An OCI representative asked to meet with leaders of the SWP to talk about the situation. He said that the OCI was still interested in opening a discussion with the United Secretariat but if this was not possible, the OCI would like to invite the SWP to hold such a discussion.

6. The leaders of the SWP said that in their opinion it

would be incorrect to open a unilateral discussion, but they would refer the matter to the United Secretariat, which they did.

7. After considering the matter, the United Secretariat decided that it was advisable to hold an exploratory meeting with representatives of the OCRFI. The delegation, which included representatives of the French section, the LSA/LSO of Canada, and American observers, was empowered to offer an exchange of internal bulletins, and joint work in such areas as defense of political prisoners and dissemination of Trotskyist literature in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

8. The joint meeting was held on October 15, 1974, and agreement was reached on the proposals made by the United Secretariat. Full reports of the meeting were made to the various organizations. These were published as part of the appendixes in the October 1975 issue of the *IIDB* that were later censored by the majority of the United Secretariat. Copies are still available from the SWP.

9. The Spartacist League, a tiny ultraleft sect, sought to disrupt further amelioration of relations between the OCRFI and the United Secretariat by publishing an internal report, circulated among the leaders of the OCRFI, that had fallen into the hands of the Spartacist League. This, along with an "analysis," appeared in the November 22, 1974, issue of the *Workers Vanguard*.

10. This crude effort to break up the course decided upon by the United Secretariat of moving toward friendlier relations with the OCRFI seemed to have failed. Nonetheless the doubts of some of the members of the United Secretariat may have been reinforced. In addition a couple of epithets aimed at a leading member of the United Secretariat appeared about the same time in *Informations Ouvrières*.

The best policy would have been to ignore the epithets and also the needling of the Spartacist League. It should have been obvious that a turn such as had been made might not meet with unanimous approval among either the ranks of the OCRFI or the leadership as a whole; and this should have been borne in mind by those capable of thinking politically. Should the OCRFI be helped in making the turn or should the turn be made more difficult?

A few members of the United Secretariat thought it would be helpful if the SWP were to make a statement that could help allay the doubts in the ranks of the International Majority Tendency. The Political Bureau of the Socialist Workers party acceded to this view in spite of doubts about its wisdom and issued a statement that was published in the January 13, 1975, issue of *Intercontinental Press*. The internal report that had been circulated among the leaders of the OCRFI was published in the same issue of *Intercontinental Press*.

The statement of the Political Bureau of the Socialist Workers party included a summary of the negotiations between the United Secretariat and the OCRFI and the role played by the SWP in seeking to overcome the old factional lines. It also took up the current status of these efforts: "The willingness of the OCI leaders to engage in the give-and-take of a free discussion is a favorable development, in our opinion. It promises to open the way to a fruitful dialogue."

The statement then dealt with the difficulty that would be created by any reversion by the OCRFI to the use of epithets, and cited the instance mentioned above: "We

think that such characterizations are out of order. We consider them to be hangovers from past factional positions that demand reexamination if a serious discussion is to be undertaken. . . .

"The issues in those factional battles and who turned out to be correct historically can be debated without the use of epithets. To let disparaging labels stand in the way of a comradely discussion of current differences (however much the current differences may be related in the final analysis to past positions) would be a political mistake, in our opinion."

This statement of the Political Bureau of the Socialist Workers party was published in *Intercontinental Press*, as we indicated above, despite our doubts about the wisdom of such a move. To this day it has never been published by the LCR in either a public organ or an internal bulletin. The ranks of the LCR have been kept in ignorance of its existence.

11. On behalf of the OCI Political Bureau, Comrade Lambert replied to this statement in a letter which was received in New York in May 1975. On the question of the use of epithets, he agreed that serious revolutionists do not "bring forward the personal side or . . . consider positions previously held by anyone on either side to be an indelible brand."

On the specific instances cited in the statement of the Political Bureau of the SWP, he agreed that the epithets were inadvisable.

Moreover, he specified that "epithets are not essential, and for our part we are prepared to make all the accommodations in form, if they will permit a discussion to take place, which, as you say, must be 'basic.'"

Comrade Lambert argued for the correctness of the OCI positions on the issues involved in the epithets, and also pointed out that bad epithets had been used against the OCI.

He stressed the importance to the Trotskyist movement of closing ranks and combining resources, the better to take full advantage of the revolutionary opportunities now opening up.

The text of this letter was included in the material in the October 1975 issue of IIDB censored by the majority of the United Secretariat.

12. The next important development was a letter dated June 29, 1975, from the LCR Central Committee objecting to an invitation extended to the OCRFI to attend the open sessions of the 1975 convention of the SWP.

This surprising objection was filed on purely formal grounds—that it should have been first discussed in the United Secretariat and the French section of the Fourth International.

In addition, the LCR Central Committee advanced a series of political reasons that could have no other logical conclusion than the immediate severing of all relations with the OCRFI. The committee did not advance any *new* reasons to justify this turn in course.

"You know that since May 1968, without going back further," the letter continued, "the relationship between the LCR and the OCI has been essentially a hostile one because of the grave political differences that exist between the two organizations and because of the OCI's conduct in the class struggle in France."

The letter then cited the positions held by the OCI in the student struggles of 1968, the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, the 1974 French presidential elections, etc.

In addition, the LCR Central Committee said, ". . . the Lambertists habitually poison political discussions . . . by hurling accusations about people being agents of the bourgeoisie or the Kremlin." "The Lambertists also habitually use violence within the workers movement, especially against the far-left organizations."

Worst of all the "invitation to Lambert . . . will inevitably become known publicly and interpreted by everyone, starting with the OCI, as a political act. Everyone will conclude that the SWP intends to put the OCI and the LCR on the same level. And this conclusion will be correct."

Along with these arguments the Central Committee served an ultimatum that unless the invitation to the OCRFI were withdrawn the LCR would refuse to send a delegation to the convention of the SWP, a threat they carried out.

The reaction of the Central Committee of the LCR could be interpreted as not thought out. Without offering any reasons whatsoever other than those that could have been advanced a decade or two decades ago, the Central Committee of the LCR had abruptly reversed a course it and the United Secretariat had previously agreed upon and followed up to the point of exchanging internal bulletins and seeking areas of common endeavor.

13. The objections raised by the Central Committee of the LCR to the SWP's invitation to the OCRFI to observe the open sessions of the SWP convention were taken up point by point in a letter by Mary-Alice Waters in behalf of the Political Committee of the SWP. The text was published in the October 1975 issue of the IIDB.

Unfortunately it, too, was censored by the majority of the United Secretariat. So far as we know, the ranks of the LCR, like those of the IMG and other sections of the Fourth International, have been kept in ignorance of this reply to the Central Committee of the LCR.

The leaders of the LCR, it should be added, never replied to it.

14. In September 1975, the OCI invited the United Secretariat and the SWP to send observers to the OCI convention, which was scheduled to convene at the end of December. The OCI leadership said that if these observers so desired, they would be extended the privilege of taking the floor to say whatever they wished to the delegates.

The majority of the United Secretariat argued that it was inadvisable to accept this invitation unless the OCI first made a public self-criticism of its alleged use of violence against members of the Varga group, the Spartacists, and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire.

The minority of the United Secretariat contended that pending an investigation of the supposed incidents, a much better course would be to send a delegation to the OCI convention to observe the proceedings and the discussion, and to take the floor to explain to the militants of the OCI how the use of violence in the workers movement violated the traditions of Trotskyism and how it stood in the way of an amelioration of relations and the opening of a discussion on the political differences that still divided the OCI from the sections and groups adhering to the United Secretariat or in sympathy with its aims.

This proposal was rejected by the majority of the United Secretariat, an action that was sectarian to say the least.

The documents on this subject were published as

appendixes in the February 1976 issue of the SWP's *Internal Information Bulletin* containing a report on the world movement made by Mary-Alice Waters that was adopted by the National Committee of the SWP on January 4, 1976. The report and the appendixes were submitted to the *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*.

At the March meeting of the United Secretariat, the majority agreed to accept the report for publication in the *IIDB*. However, it added the proviso: "to postpone its publication till after the prior printing of at least one political resolution on one of the questions proposed on the world congress agenda."

Since this prerequisite has not yet been fulfilled, the postponement is still in effect.

* * *

Against this background, let us now weigh the objections registered by the majority of the United Secretariat to the invitation extended to the OCRFI to observe the open sessions of the 1976 convention of the SWP.

The objections consist of characterizations of the OCRFI:

1. The OCRFI, it is charged, uses terms like dubbing "The Fourth International not as a Trotskyist, but as a counter-revolutionary organization, as the destroyers of Trotskyism, etc."

We have considered this charge above. The motion adduces *nothing new*, and obviously refers to the period before the OCRFI took a new look at the United Secretariat and the organizations in sympathy with its aims. It refers to the period of factional war before the United Secretariat and the LCR decided to respond positively to the overtures of the OCRFI.

2. The OCI is accused of using violence within the workers movement. The specific allegations in connection with this involve the LIRQI (the Varga group). This is now being investigated by a commission of Trotskyist organizations, including representatives of the SWP.

The OCI vigorously denies that it follows a policy of using violence within the workers movement.

3. The OCRFI is accused of "lack of democracy" within its own organization.

The fact is that the OCRFI proposed publishing, and distributing to the entire membership, any documents the United Secretariat desired in a common discussion. Whether the proposal is sincere could be determined very quickly in practice.

It is not excluded that they would live up to their commitment with greater promptness and consistency than has been displayed by the leaders of the LCR in carrying out *their* obligation to assure rapid publication and circulation in French of all material submitted to the *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*.

4. It is charged that "no assertion about their [the OCRFI] accepting democratic centralism on the basis of a discussion could be taken as meaningful at present."

This, too, is subject to an easy test. The OCRFI has promised to abide by any agenda decided upon by the United Secretariat for a discussion of the differences.

5. It is charged that "it is impossible to allow someone to participate in a discussion to determine the line of action

for the Fourth International to build itself, when the aim of the organization requesting that participation could only be, if consistent with its stated characterizations, not to discuss how the International may be most effectively built by must be to destroy, damage or split the International."

The line of action for the Fourth International "to build itself" will, of course, be determined by a democratically prepared congress. The line will inevitably be affected by the attitude adopted toward other groups no matter what the form of discourse with them (extremely hostile, or on a comradely basis).

More important than this is the judgement that the intent of the OCRFI overture is to "destroy, damage or split the International." But no *new* facts are presented to justify this conclusion which, if consistent, would require immediately breaking off all relations with the OCRFI and exposing their maneuver publicly. The motion of the majority of the United Secretariat points to absolutely nothing new that would call for reversing the line followed up to now.

We are thus forced to come reluctantly to the following conclusion:

For (at least) the past two years the majority of the United Secretariat have oscillated in their policy, probably under the pressure of two wings. One wing thinks it is best to respond favorably to the overture of the OCRFI. The other wing, holding an opposite opinion, has done everything possible to stall action and to provoke the OCRFI into abandoning its effort to establish comradely relations that could open the way to a fruitful discussion of differences.

This is the source of such red herrings as "the Lambertists habitually poison political discussions," "the Lambertists also habitually use violence," and "the OCI is seeking only to sharpen the differences and tensions in the International."

This line, which now seems dominant in the IMT, is sectarian to the core.

The current attempt to drag in the rules of democratic centralism represents nothing but a cover-up for this sectarian line. It is intended to divert attention from a renewal of public factional war on the OCRFI and destruction of the progress registered in thawing differences that were frozen a quarter of a century ago.

Proof of this is provided by an article written by Michel Lequenne, a member of the Political Bureau of the LCR, which was published in the May-June 1976 issue of *Revue de Critique Communiste* under the title "Continuity and Discontinuity of 'Lambertism'—A Contribution to the History of a Degeneration." The article contains interesting material on what happened to the French section of the Fourth International in Pablo's time; but the main objective of the article is to do a job on Lambert.

We are treated to a series of epithets that stand in strange contrast to the admonitions of the United Secretariat about such polemical methods. Lambert, as described by Lequenne, is an "empiricist without principles," a "despicable falsifier," "talents for intrigue," "degeneration became incurable," "fundamentally an opportunist without principles," "a miniature Stalin," "he created a new tendency, a fake left based on petty bureaucrats," "loyal allies of reformist trade-union bureaucrats and outstanding figures of Freemasonry," "a sect of impotent barking dogs, whirling dervishes of the *Transi-*

tion Program transformed into a prayer wheel, phobic anti-Stalinists but . . . as in the F.O. and elsewhere factotums of the worst reformist leaderships," and more on the same level.

In 1955 the group to which Lequenne belonged denounced the Lambert group as being in its death agony. "Unfortunately," Lequenne admits in his article, "this death agony has been prolonged for more than twenty years."

Alas, from that arises a political problem that cannot possibly be solved by the dead-end factionalism exhibited by Lequenne. *The OCI today is comparable in strength to the LCR.* That is a hard fact for which Lequenne offers no explanation, still less a political line by which this could be turned into an advantage for French Trotskyism. He prefers to fight the battles of twenty years ago, as if the question could be reduced to his personal feud with Lambert.

Besides the size of the OCI, other problems are involved. The OCI has substantial bases in certain plants and unions. Likewise it has a strong base in the student movement. It has done superior work in the dissident movement in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, as shown, for example, in what it was able to achieve in the Leonid Plyushch case.

In addition, it is part of a substantial international movement with affiliates in various countries that are actively advancing the basic program of Trotskyism in the workers movement.

Thus the line of dead-end factionalism, the sectarian attitude now displayed by the majority of the United Secretariat, does not contribute to building the Fourth International. It does just the opposite. And the use of "democratic centralism" as a cloak for conducting a zigzag line, for engaging in the most arbitrary switches, and for approving articles like Lequenne's does not strengthen democratic centralism. It helps destroy it.

Lequenne's article reflects more than an individual opinion. It dovetails with a resolution adopted by a majority of the Central Committee of the LCR at its June 26-27, 1976, meeting. (See Appendix III.) The resolution outlines the policies adopted by the Central Committee majority toward various organizations. The general perspective is to adopt tactics pointing in the direction of fusions or at least close working relations with what are characterized in the resolution as left-centrist, centrist, and right-centrist currents. With these currents there is a "possibility—on the basis of an agreement on a united front—of an organic link-up extending from the constitution of a common front to the perspective of fusion."

As for the OCI and its youth organization, the AJS, an opposite course is to be followed. They can be expected to "enter the ranks of the counterrevolution." The "most that can be hoped for is to split them."

Thus we learn that the objective of the LCR is to split the OCI-AJS, *precisely the objective they accuse the OCI of having with regard to the Fourth International.*

To justify this policy the resolution cites the stand taken by the OCI in favor of the MNA in the first stages of the Algerian war; its failure to join the student barricades in Paris in 1968, its criticisms of the leadership of the Lip strike, and more recently its support of the democratic rights of the Portuguese Socialist party when it stood in opposition to the capitalist government.

The LCR will not simply ignore the OCI and the AJS. It will "battle against their process of degeneration by, on the one hand, united opposition to any bureaucratic behavior (violence, slanders. . .), and by, on the other hand, a polemical political debate, and unity of action on specific points (against repression. . .) without any organizational rapprochement."

Certain tactical adjustments will be made. "In face of our preliminary demands concerning violence, the Lambertists have been compelled to make declarations condemning violence. We must continue a concrete battle against their practices. But we cannot give the impression that this preliminary demand is simply a pretext to refuse to discuss with them. We have thus taken the initiative (in conformity with the resolution of the CC) of proposing that they contribute to the free tribune in *Rouge* (occasional and not regular contributions)."

Also the LCR is prepared to engage in common activities with them either occasionally or in certain sectors like the Soviet bloc countries.

The explicit overall objective, however, is to "split them."

The latest move along this sectarian course is a decision made by the majority of the Political Bureau of the LCR, and read to most of the cells in Paris on July 26, 1976, not to send a delegation to the SWP convention. (See Appendix IV.)

The decision covers the entire organization. Members who might decide to attend the SWP convention on their own are warned that if they do so they may be brought up on charges:

"The comrades of the French section of the Fourth International who despite this decision of the Political Bureau might decide to attend the SWP convention as individuals would do so with full knowledge of the facts, with full understanding of the danger to the unity of the international that is involved in such factional practices and in violation of the decisions of the French section."

This move accords with the decision of the majority of the United Secretariat to censor the October 1975 issue of the *IIDB*; and it has the same purpose—to help keep the membership of the LCR in ignorance of the facts about the overture of the OCRFI and how it has been handled over the past two years to the detriment of the Fourth International.

The Political Committee of the SWP views the action taken by the Political Bureau of the LCR as a very bad omen. It not only sharpens relations quite unnecessarily; it tends to shift the current discussion in the world Trotskyist movement from the level of political differences to the level of organizational grievances, some of them magnified out of all proportion, as in this instance.

The indefensible internal measure of subjecting members to possible expulsion for observing a convention of a sister organization constitutes another step in the process of converting democratic centralism into super centralism. *This is evidence of a very dangerous trend, not only toward sectarianism but toward the most arbitrary organizational practices.*

It ought to be added that the action injures the ranks of the SWP by depriving them of the opportunity of meeting members of the LCR—whatever their views may be on the internal struggle going on in the world Trotskyist movement. This is a novel way of teaching members of the

SWP "a lesson."

By the same token the Fourth International itself is injured indirectly by this breach of internationalism. The LCR is likewise injured because its members will not be able to hear the personal impressions that could have been brought back by their comrades.

The worst injury, however, is dealt to those members of the LCR who saved up for a trip to the United States to observe a convention of the SWP. After reaching their destination, they were confronted with a warning that attending the SWP convention would constitute a violation of discipline for which they might be brought up on charges. That's "a lesson" in democratic centralism they ought to long remember.

Ironically, at the very moment the SWP is able to celebrate a considerable victory in the struggle against the repressive forces headed by the CIA and the FBI, the Political Bureau of the LCR chose to celebrate in their own way by passing a Voorhis Act for application within a super centralist Fourth International.

The motion of the majority of the Political Bureau of the LCR not to send a delegation to attend the convention of the SWP and barring LCR members from observing it, along with the motion adopted by the majority of the United Secretariat disapproving the invitation to the OCRFI must be considered in conjunction with still another move of the same kind.

This was the attempt of the majority of the United Secretariat to dictate to the LSA/LSO whom it could invite to attend its convention in December 1975. The relevant documents have been published in the *SWP Internal Information Bulletin* No. 2, February 1976.

Although these documents were accepted by the majority of the United Secretariat last March for publication in the *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, they have not yet appeared, eight months later. Thus the membership of the LCR and the members of other sections who do not read English remain in ignorance of them. Here is a short summary:

The LSA/LSO (the Canadian section of the Fourth International) invited the Groupe Socialiste des Travailleurs du Québec (GSTQ), which is affiliated to the OCRFI, to send a delegation to observe its convention. The move was a correct one in light of the common fruitful work the two organizations had been carrying out in various important areas of the class struggle in Québec. The establishment of comradely relations, including discussion of political differences, had proved to be of real value in strengthening the Trotskyist movement in Canada.

The majority of the United Secretariat came down full weight. A letter was sent to the leadership of the Canadian section informing them that a motion had been passed in October, ruling "That sections, sympathizing organizations and organizations in political solidarity with the F.I. should take no initiative in relation with the O.C.R.F.I. or its sections, without prior consultation of and approval by the USEC."

Citing this ruling, the majority of the United Secretariat ordered the Canadian section to cease and desist:

"If under these circumstances the Canadian group affiliated to the so-called 'O.C.R.F.I.' indeed is invited to your convention and (or) preconvention discussion, without prior consultation of and approval by the USEC, in spite of the above quoted resolution and after your having unambiguously been informed about it, this would mean an open and deliberate defiance of the organizational integrity and structure of the Fourth International, and a clear breach of discipline."

The language is that of a court summons for violation of a new traffic regulation; but the content is of considerable concern. As the majority of the United Secretariat more and more place their own factional interests above everything else and begin to act as a sect, it becomes increasingly necessary for them to rely on commands and rigid regulation of the activities of national sections. On this course, the end results are the stifling of local initiative and the development of pliable hand-raisers instead of self-reliant national leaderships capable of leading a revolution. The outcome is completely opposite to the objectives of democratic centralism.

* * *

On the requests made by the United Secretariat majority, the Political Committee of the SWP agrees:

1. To give favorable consideration to requests for invitations to any other currents that national sections of the Fourth International would like to be seated as observers at the open sessions of the SWP convention. Nothing new is involved in this; it has always been our policy to invite observers of this kind.

2. To recommend to the delegates at the convention that a special session be held to discuss the invitation sent to the OCRFI to attend open sessions of the SWP convention.

3. To publish the text of the two motions adopted by the majority of the United Secretariat in the *Internal Information Bulletin* of the SWP.

In addition to this, the Political Committee of the SWP requests the United Secretariat to publish this reply in the *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*.

Finally, we note with approval that the United Secretariat and the LCR have decided to open discussions with Lutte Ouvrière. We hope that these discussions end in a more fruitful way than the efforts at unification in 1970-71 which were abruptly broken off for reasons that have not yet been satisfactorily explained by either the leaders of the French section or the majority of the United Secretariat.

We see no difference in principle between trying to narrow the gap with Lutte Ouvrière and trying to narrow the gap with the OCI. In each instance this is the correct course to follow in the task of strengthening and expanding the Fourth International. We hope that after due consideration the majority of the United Secretariat and the Central Committee of the LCR will resume their positive response to the overtures of the OCRFI and turn away from a course that in its logic can lead only to permanent factions and super centralism.

July 29, 1976

APPENDIX I

LETTER FROM MICHEL PABLO TO ERNEST MANDEL

TRANSLATION

“Sous La Drapeau du Socialisme”
Revue de la Tendance Marxiste
Révolutionnaire Internationale
Paris, February 11, 1976

Dear Comrade Ernest,

We are confirming in writing for your convenience the main points we discussed in Brussels.

Proceeding from our evaluation of the present conjuncture in Europe, we stressed the need to build united revolutionary Marxist organizations in time that have a serious mass base and are armed with a transitional program that is correct also in relation to the traditional Socialist and Communist mass organizations. This task is particularly urgent in countries such as Portugal, Spain, Italy, France and Greece. We stressed our assessment—which we believe you share—of the European situation, where for the first time in a long while, real possibilities are shaping up for revolutionary openings that could lead to the victory of the socialist revolution. We mentioned the case of France, where there is at present the PSU on one hand and on the other the LCR, which approached the PSU with a request to open discussions with a view to possible unification, a perspective we support.

However, we see this eventual unification in the framework of a new organization that would not at the outset be part of any international formation, but would admit tendencies supporting the idea of joining one or another international organization at the proper time. This point, it seems to us, is essential to really clearing the way for both discussions about unification, and unification itself. Looking at it realistically, we cannot in the short run succeed in building an organization that would be revolutionary Marxist in its entire program. Rather, what is possible are organizations rapidly evolving toward such a program, especially in the context of an objective situation favorable to such an evolution.

We believe that the conditions of long-term crisis of

European capitalism in particular favor such a perspective. Therefore, we insisted that questions of principle of an organizational character that would obstruct the discussion and unification should not be raised, if our common goal remains creating in time substantial united organizations of the type to which we refer.

If we take the revolutionary perspectives in Europe seriously as well as the Portuguese experience, which was disastrous from the point of view of the state of preparation of the revolutionary left, we must lose no time in seizing the opportunities for such a regroupment in various European countries, beginning with France.

We also stressed our more general interest in the development of the Fourth International, from which we were so rashly expelled in 1965, and on the way the crisis within its ranks is evolving.

We emphasized that on important questions of assessing situations and of tactics, we feel ourselves to be closer to the tendency known as “European” but that we have no intention whatsoever of exploiting your internal differences, hoping rather that the Fourth International as a whole will come to correct positions. We repeat: our approach at this stage is conditioned by the urgency of the objective situation in Europe.

We have also stated that we are prepared as an international tendency—over and above more exhaustive and deepgoing discussions about forming revolutionary Marxist tendencies with a serious mass base everywhere—to consider all forms of practical collaboration among forces that are converging ideologically, without raising any prior conditions of “principle.”

We hope that the contact begun in Brussels will be continued, even if for the time being it is only at the level of joint practical work as in the campaign we are conducting through the Russell Foundation Committee for the freedom of Portuguese prisoners, support to Angola and Mozambique, etc. . . .

With fraternal greetings,
Michel Pablo

APPENDIX II

EXCERPT FROM IMG POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES

10) Letter to the USEC:

Jones resolution: “that the following letter be sent to the USEC”

Carried 6-0-2.

Text of letter:

“We have received the minutes of the November meeting of the United Secretariat. We noted the resolution passed regarding the distribution of the IIDB containing the correspondence concerning the attendance of the OCRFI at the SWP convention.

As the resolutions on these questions have been passed by the USEC we have of course carried it out. We however wish to protest in the strongest possible terms against the motivation contained in this resolution which introduces a new and unacceptable principle into organisational relations in the International. We refer to the statements which call for the deletion of the correspondence from this bulletin “in order to teach the international minority a lesson”. This is quite unacceptable. All decisions regarding organisation, or other questions in the International, must

be decided by the objective criteria of the statutes, the interests of the working class, etc. They cannot be introduced to "teach a lesson" to anyone, least of all a minority in the International. If the deletion of this material had been decided on because its inclusion had not been authorized, it would be possible to have a serious discussion on the merits or otherwise of this decision. The present motivation however attempts to introduce a principle which is completely unacceptable and which, if seriously defended, would cast into question the democratic norms and functioning of the International.

We call upon the U. Sec. to withdraw the resolution on this question and to redecide the question of the circulation of this material on a correct organisational basis.

As we consider this question an individual error, and not a sign of a deeply wrong policy by the International leadership, we have every confidence that this decision will be reversed and wish to take the matter no further. In the unlikely event that this is not done, however, we request that this letter, together with the resolution referred to, be placed on the IIDB."

Excerpt from Minutes of November, 1975 United Secretariat Meeting

Motion by Walter: The United Secretariat notes that in the International Internal Discussion Bulletin No. 6 of 1975, there has been published an exchange of correspondence around the issue of relations with the "OCRFI," as annexes to Comrade Jack Barnes' report to the August 1975 convention of the SWP. The U Sec further notes that while Comrade Barnes' report was regularly submitted to the international discussion at the October 1975 U Sec meeting as an oral report to be reproduced in a IIDB, the publication of these annexes was never proposed and therefore represents an irregular procedure. This is all the more regrettable as it involves a matter—the problem of relations with the "OCRFI"—on which unilateral initiatives by comrades sympathetic to the minority already have unnecessarily increased tensions inside the movement. In order to clearly demonstrate to the minority that the practice of unilateral decisions and accomplished facts is not only inadmissible but also counterproductive for its own purposes, the U Sec therefore rejects the proposal to

include the exchange of correspondence around the "OCRFI" issue in the international internal discussion bulletin and calls upon all sections and sympathizing sections to strictly adhere to this decision.

Motion Celso: To submit to the IIDB the appendix to Jack Barnes' report to the SWP convention containing the correspondence with the OCRFI for the information of the membership of the FI.

Vote on Walter Motion: For: 10
Against: 8
Abstention: 1
Not Voting: 0

Vote on Celso Motion: For: 8
Against: 10
Abstention: 1
Not Voting: 0

APPENDIX III

GARCIN DOCUMENT: OUR UNITY POLICY

I. A Recapitulation of the Basis for this Policy (See IB #38)

We analyze the development of the far left organizations as the diversified political expression of the emergence of a broad, politically confused vanguard. Its appearance takes place in the context of a broader process of recomposition of the workers movement (the growth of the social democracy and the appearance of left wings within it, the crisis of Stalinism, and the existence of "left" syndicalist currents).

Of course, the historical, programmatic and international references of these organizations are important questions to be debated with them, but these references often remain formal, purely ideological, even self-justifying from the standpoint of a practical course (cf. the refusal of LO [Lutte Ouvrière] to recognize workers states other than the USSR; the Lambertists' refusal to recognize the working-class character of the Cuban state, or the opportunism of Révo [Révolution] on China). What is decisive for us is the actual program of these organizations, expressed essentially through:

(a) their policy in relation to the traditional workers movement;

(b) their relationship with the broad vanguard and the mass movement;

(c) their extent of democratic internal life or bureaucratization.

Thus, we have analyzed the PSU [Parti Socialiste Unifié—United Socialist party], LO and Révolution as centrist organizations—right centrist in the case of the PSU, which bases its strategy on a regeneration, at least partially, of the traditional workers movement; left centrist in the cases of LO and Révo both of which in their own way look forward to the reconstruction of the *new workers movement* as against the old one. Here we must take into consideration the possibility that such organizations as the PSU and Révo-GOP, which are particularly sensitive to external pressures, may move from left centrist positions to right centrist positions and vice versa under the pressure of events, as we see in Spain, Italy, and Portugal. (This is why an international polemic with these currents is desirable.)

—In proportion to their respective weight in the broad workers vanguard, we establish an order of priority for our

unity policy: (1) PSU; (2) LO; (3) Révo-GOP.

—We therefore make a distinction between these organizations, on the one hand, and on the other, the Mao-Stalinist sects of the HR [*Humanité Rouge*] type, a branch office of the Chinese bureaucracy (as opposed to the PCR, which is closer to Mao-centrism). Likewise we make a distinction between the PSU, LO, and Révo, and an organization undergoing a process of degeneration such as the AJS-OCI. This process of degeneration is characterized by:

—the AJS-OCI's prolonged adaptation to a sector of the social-democracy (voting for the major reports of Bergeron in FO [Force Ouvrière, a union federation] and Marange in FEN [Fédération d'Éducation Nationale, National Federation of Educators];

—its ultra-bureaucratic methods, both in its internal life and in relation to the other far-left organizations.

This distinction is not a metaphysical one:

—With the first group of organizations, it can be hoped that, on the basis of a political clarification process, they can be brought around to a generally correct policy, if not won to revolutionary Marxism, in the course of the revolutionary process, *provided, of course, that there is a relationship of forces favorable to the revolutionary Marxists.*

—With the second group, it is to be feared that they may enter the ranks of the counter-revolution, and the most that can be hoped for is to split them. These organizations are not redeemable in their entirety.

As concerns the AJS-OCI, this tendency is shown by its practical attitude

—during the Algerian war (support to the MNA)

—in May 1968 (opposition to the student barricades)

—during the Lip struggle (Bergeronesque denunciation of the Lip CFDT)

—in relation to Portugal (alignment with the Portuguese SP, "*a party which has never broken a strike.*")

Our policy toward these two types of organization is thus radically different:

—With the first: systematic unity proposals, particularly in mass work, and discussion centered on the united front and the strategy of workers councils. We see the *possibility, on the basis of a united-front agreement, of organic ties leading from the formation of a united front to a perspective of fusion.*

—With the second: a battle against their process of degeneration by, on the one hand, united opposition to any bureaucratic behavior (violence, slanders. . .), and by, on the other hand, a polemical political debate, and unity of action on specific points (against repression. . .) without any organizational rapprochement.”

This problematic is thus the complete opposite of the metaphysical problematic of a “Front of Trotskyists” which aims at making a real basis for unity out of a purely formal common reference to the transitional program (even though, of course, this reference to historical lessons provides a framework for political polemic).

II. Balance Sheet and Perspectives

(A) We have never followed a unity policy more tenacious and profoundly justified, with such disappointing results, than in the case of our unity of action of PSU-Révo-LO-LCR against repression in the army.

• From the PSU:

—Rejection by the leadership of all our proposals, whether for mass work or for discussions, which were limited to the exchange of letters (in the second LCR-PSU discussion bulletin, to be published soon, there will be two letters from the LCR and two letters from the PSU concerning our respective conceptions of unity: *United Front or People's Unity*).

—But, here and there, common work (CFDT, youth, women, army), varying from city to city.

—Above all the leadership is paying the price for its right-wing orientation by seeing the emergence of a left opposition. This opposition, representing 20 percent of the DPN [the PSU's national leadership], may draw in 30 percent or even more of the members. This is because since the departure of Rocard, the PSU has recruited “on the left” despite the line of its leadership (recruitment of CFDT unionists who had hesitated between the LCR and the PSU, a wave of recruitment around repression in the army . . .).

An important fact is that unity with the LCR is one of the most important points in the internal discussion in the PSU. This is a result, of course, of the relationship of forces, but also of the unity policy we have pursued continuously since the first congress of the LCR.

However, on the national scale, we have committed two types of errors:

(1) At first, we made our approach to the PSU too specific, giving the impression that we were leaving out LO and Révo. (This lessened the impact of our proposals, including those directed to the PSU.)

(2) In the concrete application of our line:

—our criticism of the *mini-Lips*, while correct, was poorly explained and thus poorly understood;

—our criticisms of the work in the army, equally correct, were too hasty;

—on the other hand, we were too slow in responding to the Tours maneuver (the article by Boris should have been published as soon as the negotiations were broken off).

• From LO

The only very important positive fact is the recognition for the first time by LO that the other far-left organizations, the LCR in particular, are proletarian organizations. But there was a rejection of all unity (May 1, Tours,

etc. . .) except where they were compelled to accept it by a relationship of forces (CET), and there was a complete absence of progress in the area of the united front and mass work (on the contrary, we have seen sectarianism and trade-union bureaucratism).

• From Révo

With the trade-union turn and with the perspective of fusion with the GOP, there has been an accentuation of the process of political differentiation. If this fusion takes place (which seems to be what is happening, the new organization will be crisscrossed by different currents: anti-union ultralefts, opportunist unionists, revolutionary unionists, Trotsky-Maoists and in addition Mao-centrists. What holds this potpourri together is reducing revolutionary politics to a “catch-all” tactic of “breaking off the workers and people's left” (a tactic which can, moreover, combine with opportunism toward the Union of the Left and sectarianism in practice toward the reformists in mass work).

(B) How to Continue?

Whatever the difficulties in applying our unity policy, we must maintain it at all costs because it is part of our united front policy and also of our tactic of building the revolutionary party.

(1) *In relation to the PSU*, we should not change our attitude because of the appearance of a left tendency. We continue to address ourselves to the PSU as such; any other attitude would appear tactical and maneuverist.

—We continue to propose organizing a discussion that would go beyond the exchange of documents.

—We ask to participate in the general assemblies on self-management. Locally, we ask to participate in preparing them.

—We propose a fusion of CDA and IDS [two anti-militarist organizations] on the basis of an agreement clearly defining the movement as centered on supporting the struggles of draftees for their democratic demands as well as establishing how such a movement should be run (in particular respecting the organizational autonomy of the soldiers' movement).

—We everywhere propose to the members of the PSU that they draw the balance sheet of the CFDT [Confédération Française et Démocratique du Travail—French Democratic Confederation of Labor] Congress: what progress have they made in their perspective of a trade-union tendency? How do they assess the fact that the HA CUI TEX federation (many of whose officials are PSU members) went over to the Rhone-Alps UR (whose main leader, Héritier, is in CERES [Centre d'Éducation et Recherches Socialistes, a left-social democratic tendency])?

—Furthermore, insofar as the debate between the majority and minority of the PSU is public, we will give this debate a broad projection, and will make known our own political positions on the major questions in dispute (without intervening in regard to the form of the debate itself).

—This being said, a question arises right now: what are the minority's perspectives? We have hardly any information about this, but it seems to us that everything will depend on the attitude of the PSU leadership and the margin for maneuver offered by the reformists (CFDT, PS, PC). If, as is likely, the reformists refuse to leave it any way out and want to force it to accept the humiliating

conditions of the Common Program in the municipal and legislative elections, then the PSU leadership will be forced to maneuver, preaching "People's Unity" from below (for lack of the ability to achieve it at the top) while promoting organizational sectarianism. (In so doing, moreover, it can get the support of Révo-GOP.) Then, inside the PSU, a right, a center, and a left would appear, with a majority for the center, which, although agreeing with the right's strategy (integration into a renegotiated Union of the Left) would be forced to apply the left's tactic (unity in action with the revolutionary organizations). If the reformists open up the door a crack for the PSU (which is hardly likely before Mitterrand's entry into the government), the leadership will be swallowed up, and there will be a split in this party. So, it is important now to make an assessment of the PSU minority, which at present extends far beyond the ex-AMR [Alliance Marxiste Révolutionnaire, the group led by Michel Pablo, which dissolved itself into the PSU]. The document produced for the Bordeaux meeting is mediocre, but the article which appeared in TS [*Tribune Socialiste*, paper of the PSU] signed by M. Najman and Maguy Guillien is very good. (We have not yet received the documents produced at Bordeaux.)

We can thus hope that we have a rather full agreement with the minority on the problematic of the united front, which would make possible at least united activity in mass work. From this standpoint, the IDS-CDA work and the student work will constitute tests.

But the debate with the minority (if a split took place in the PSU, which seems hardly conceivable before the left's entry into the government) would move quickly onto the problem of the fusion. On this question, there would certainly be four positions in this grouping.

(1) For no fusion, but for a *self-management movement* repeating the post-May-1968 proposal for a *revolutionary movement*. For us, this is out of the question.

(2) For fusion with the LCR, but rejecting the Fourth, which for us is excluded (to the extent that the concrete conditions for the transformation of the Fourth into the mass international are not fulfilled).

(3) For no fusion, but a united front on the basis of an agreement on the *united front line and the tasks of the moment*. This is possible.

(4) For fusion with the LCR in the framework of the Fourth (which is obviously the most desirable).

Quite obviously, these are only hypotheses for the future. But once again, our unity policy toward the PSU is not based on these hypotheses since, so long as the relationship of forces between us and the reformists is what it is, there will be room for a PSU, and it will be necessary for us to wage a fight against it, while, of course, taking into consideration the political evolution of the PSU (its joining the UG [Union de la Gauche—Union of the Left] would be a qualitative leap);

(2) In Relation to LO

We should restate our proposals for discussing trade-union work, common activity on the CETs and accept their proposal for an international discussion (on the work of the Trotskyists during the Second World War and the colonial revolution!!).

(3) In Relation to Révo

To take up again the fraternal polemic in our press (magazine, etc. . .) aiming to increase the ideological differences among them (China, USSR. . .) and to combat

their sectarian-opportunist line of "breaking off the left." At the same time, we should have no illusions about the possibility of common mass activity nationally (cf. their attitude in the Portugal committees; their line in the CAM and in the student mobilizations).

(4) But the essential stakes are represented by the municipal and legislative elections.

For the municipal elections, our view is as follows. It is wrong to say that their only importance for revolutionaries is that they offer a forum for spreading *the whole program of the various groups*. The results of the elections also have an important political significance, because they affect the mobilization of the workers and relationship of forces in the working class. It is paradoxical, to say the least, for LO to explain that *in principle* there can be no united candidacies because of the lack of full programmatic agreement among the different organizations, while at the same time it distinguishes itself by its "rank-and-filist" campaigns, whittling down its own program to a point bordering on electoralism!

Of course the electoral results are only important *insofar as they have a clear meaning in the concrete political situation*; that is, to the degree that they demonstrate a lack of confidence in the class-collaborationist policy of the reformist parties, which commit themselves to the bourgeois parties, bourgeois institutions, the capitalists.

We are therefore in favor of united slates of revolutionaries, which can include, besides candidates of the revolutionary organizations, representatives of the "mass movements" (peasants-workers, regionalist movements, the women's liberation movement, etc. . .) under the following conditions:

(1) Agreement on a political platform that would include at the same time a proposal for united-front discussion with the SP and CP candidates, a call to vote for these candidates in the second round, along with criticism of the Common Program (the alliance with the Left Radicals, the appeal to the Gaullists, the respect for the 1958 constitution and the wish to keep Giscard, the respect for the market economy. . .), and a definition of the essential tasks that a CP-SP government would have to perform in order to be a genuine "workers government" opening the way to workers' power.

(2) Freedom of expression and independent activity for the organizations supporting the united-front slates.

(3) Those who speak "in the name of struggles" should make it clear whether they do this on their own behalf or as representatives of a mass movement, *mandated by it* to do so (no Tours-style manipulation!).

(5) The Role of PH [Politique Hebdo—Political Weekly]

PH cannot be analyzed as an organization. It is the crossroads and meeting ground for a variety of centrist viewpoints, running the gamut from positions close to revolutionary Marxism to anti-organizational populism, and including right centrism of the PSU or PDUP [Partito d'Unità Proletaria (of Italy)] type.

However, its political leadership has up to now played a positive role insofar as it has drawn the PSU to the left and promoted discussion among revolutionary organizations.

Today "PH" is increasing its audience and its contacts

in the PCF [Parti Communiste Français]. For that reason, either PH will continue to maintain its open attitude toward the revolutionary organizations and we can only gain by the expansion of its audience in the PCF, or else PH will decide that its ties with the revolutionaries are too close and interfere with its contacts in the PCF, the CFDT, and the PS, and the magazine may then become a barrier between the critical currents inside the reformist forces and the revolutionary organizations, the LCR in particular. We should therefore maintain fraternal relations with this publication, considering the positive objective role it can play. But we should not slide into an overly diplomatic approach. From time to time, we should run articles or letters in response to articles which are too "slippery."

(6) Once again, our united-front policy toward centrists, particularly the PSU, can only be effective if it is combined with:

—demonstrating our organizational strength (cf. the impact of our May 1 contingent, the importance of maintaining a central propaganda vehicle adapted to the tasks of the situation).

—our ability to defeat the reformists' attempts to exclude us, beginning by showing our ability to engage in a discussion with the left elements of the CFDT, the CERES, the critical elements of the PCF (the magazine and the daily are essential weapons from this standpoint).

(7) In Relation to the Lambertists

In face of our preliminary demands concerning violence, the Lambertists have been compelled to make declarations condemning violence. We must continue a concrete battle against their practices. But we cannot give the impression that this preliminary demand is simply a pretext to refuse to discuss with them. We have thus taken the initiative (in conformity with the resolution of the CC) of proposing that they contribute to the free tribune in *Rouge* (occasional and not regular contributions).

While continuing the fight, a united-front one if possible, against their nut-sect methods, we must develop the polemical debate. But, since their avowed aim is to split the Fourth International, since in their paranoia they see us as traitors to the revolution, their whole unity tactic

toward us boils down to a maneuverist factional activity (the latest example of which is the publication in *IO* [Informations Ouvrières, reflecting views of the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste, led by Pierre Lambert] No. 751 of the exchange of letters on the free column in *Rouge*). We can only regret that the comrades of the SWP thought it a good idea to have "special ties" with the Lambertists. As for us, while we reject any activity which reinforces their factional practices, we must attack them firmly for their policy of "revising the transitional program."

In other areas, united-front activity is possible, either conjuncturally or sectorally (for instance, participation in a united committee on repression: and in regard to the East European countries it must be acknowledged that they have gotten a lead on us with the Plyushch case).

But once again, in view of the Lambertists' practices, all united activity with them on the local level or in specific areas of work should first be referred to the central leadership bodies concerned for decision.

In Conclusion:

We should:

- (1) Publish rapidly the exchange of letters with the PSU.
- (2) Return the ball to LO (Dominique in charge).
- (3) Designate a comrade to be in charge of following Révo-GOP-PCR.
- (4) Designate a comrade to be in charge of following the Lambertists and writing a short document on the theme "When the Lambertists revise the transitional program."
- (5) Establish a commission to lay the ground work for our campaign in the municipal elections.

* * *

P.S.: Two amendments which came out of the CC discussion were accepted in principle by Garcin. The first specifies the conditions for united campaigns with the AJS-OCI against repression in the East European countries. The second specifies the conditions for including members of certain mass organizations (peasants-workers, women's movement. . .) on the united far-left slates in the municipal elections, so as to make it quite clear that the idea is not to reduce these mass organizations to revolutionary fronts.

APPENDIX IV

MOTION BY MAJORITY OF LCR POLITICAL BUREAU

FROM: Political Bureau
TO: City Leaderships, Cells

SWP CONVENTION

We have been informed by the United Secretariat of the invitation the SWP has extended to a series of organizations including Lutte Ouvrière and the Organizing Committee to Reconstruct the Fourth International to attend its convention. These invitations were made

without prior consultation with the section concerned—the French section as regards Lutte Ouvrière—and without consultation with the United Secretariat in regard to the OCRFI, which defines itself as an international organization.

We would have had no objection to inviting Lutte Ouvrière. On the other hand, the SWP comrades know perfectly well that there has been debate over what kind of relationship to have with the OCRFI and its chief section, the French OCI.

Under these conditions the SWP comrades' fait accompli

gives an indisputably factional aspect to their convention. Therefore, the Political Bureau of the French section protests these actions of the SWP comrades and resolves not to send a delegation to their convention.

This decision is binding on leading comrades of the organization and on all its members as well.

The comrades of the French section of the Fourth

International who despite this decision of the Political Bureau might decide to attend the SWP convention as individuals would do so with full knowledge of the facts, with full understanding of the danger to the unity of the international that is involved in such factional practices and in violation of the decisions of the French section.

APPENDIX V

REPLY BY MATTI

[Following is a translation of a statement by LCR Political Bureau member Matti, who voted against the Political Bureau motion of July 23.]

The SWP, like all the sections of the International, invites many centrist organizations from all over the world to its convention, whether they consider themselves Trotskyist or not. In the absence of a policy defined and voted on by the U.S. [United Secretariat] toward the various centrist groups, every section invites the groups and organizations it wants to. Thus, the French section has recently had a consistent policy of exchanges with a number of centrist groups from other countries without its being subjected to accusations of "factionalism." The French PB [Political Bureau] has even met representatives of the TMRI [Tendance Marxiste Révolutionnaire Internationale—International Revolutionary Marxist Tendency, the grouping led by Michel Pablo]. However the U.S. has not defined in writing the framework of the policy of the Fourth toward this current and toward its factional policy directed at us. It therefore becomes urgent for the U.S. to define a clear overall policy that can be applied by all the sections. Until such a policy is laid down, any accusation of "factionalism" is senseless. For months now the U.S. has received proposals for discussion from the OCRFI [Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International]. There has been a delay in replying, and this has left the way open for taking every possible sort of position. It seems that several incidents have taken place as a result. In particular, this occurred when the OCI invited the U.S. to its congress.

We need a *policy* toward the OCRFI and not evasive and defensive replies that take the form of exclusionism. Without this, year in and year out we have to take positions on a case-by-case basis and in the worst conditions. Therefore, concerning the invitation of the OCRFI, it is up to the U.S. to state its position, and in writing, not through unverifiable "rumors." If the U.S.

sends a delegate despite the invitation of the OCRFI to the SWP convention (as last year), why should the SFQI [French Section of the Fourth International] not do so? Is it because the U.S. forbids all the sections from doing so? Do all the sections forbid their members from going there?

The only point that concerns only the French section is the invitation to LO [Lutte Ouvrière]. Every time a line of contact is established with a French organization by any other section, the French PB should be consulted first, if possible. This respect for the rules of the International is elementary. If, for example, the French PB made contact with Italian centrist groups without informing the Italian section, a protest by the Italian comrades would be justified and understandable. The SWP should therefore have consulted us on the invitation to LO. And this was an invitation we would have agreed with, in accordance with the spirit of the U.S. reply to LO on their proposal of "unification of the world Trotskyist movement." Moreover, LO was invited to the Ninth World Congress as an observer and the question has been raised of inviting them to the Eleventh World Congress.

One last point: the PB decision to forbid all the members of the SFQI from being present as individuals (without pretending to represent the SFQI) is, quite simply, grotesque, and makes those who introduce such a spirit into the International look ridiculous. Since when do we issue this kind of indefensible "lettres de cachet" [arbitrary royal orders]? The comrades who adopted this motion have lost their heads in their factional blindness. It is necessary to fight against them to assure the circulation of ideas inside our international organization and to stand by the advice that we have always given in our cadre schools: "Comrades, whenever you go to another country, be sure to get in touch with the section there and take the fullest advantage of your vacations and all other trips to get to know the International."

MATTI

A Few Observations on Comrade Barzman's "Evaluation" of the February 1976 IEC Plenum

by Joseph Hansen

1.

Comrade John Barzman's "evaluation" of the February 1976 plenum of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, which was published in the *Internal Information Bulletin*, No. 6, April 1976, has three components: (1) Reportage on what was discussed at the sessions of the IEC; (2) information about some of the current views of the International Majority Tendency; and (3) his own personal opinions. Since Comrade Barzman offers no clear demarcation between his personal opinions and the positions of the IMT, it is quite likely that he identifies the two. However, the top leaders of the IMT may see it differently, so that on some points Comrade Barzman's "evaluation" could be subject to correction or modification by them.

Nonetheless, the information about the thinking going on in the camp of the IMT is of interest and deserves study. For instance, we are told the following:

"Despite deep differences, the F.I. has remained united and comrades have been able to influence each other across tendency and faction lines. Thus the IMT caucus discussed the draft of thorough self-criticism of the line of the Ninth World Congress on Latin America." (p. 24.)

It could be welcome news that the comrades of the IMT are preparing a thorough self-criticism of the ultraleft line they pressed for adoption at the Ninth World Congress and subsequently practiced in the form of guerrilla war ("armed struggle") until it led to the destruction of the Bolivian and Argentinian sections of the Fourth International. I say it "could be welcome news," since not having been present at the caucus of the IMT, not having seen even a tentative draft of the document, and not having heard what differences may exist within the IMT over the points to be included, I have no choice but to reserve judgment. Perhaps the "self-criticism" will not be "thorough" but will prove to be tempered by factional considerations.

The importance of the IMT's reviewing the "turn" made at the Ninth World Congress and the subsequent development of that turn is obvious. It was because of the turn that differences appeared on an international scale, eventually taking the form of openly organized international tendencies. And it was because of the IMT's failure, or refusal, to recognize the clear lessons to be drawn from the debacle suffered by its course in Latin America that the differences became exacerbated, causing the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency to convert itself into a faction. (The IMT had already been functioning as a faction, while disclaiming this to be the case.)

Thus the political cause of the divisions, dissension, and factional tensions in the Fourth International and the organizations sympathetic to its aims are traceable to the turn at the Ninth World Congress, which took the form in Latin America of a guerrillaist line. A serious effort by the IMT to weigh that turn and draw the corresponding lessons should most certainly win the approval of

members of the LTF and help a great deal toward resumption of the comradely atmosphere that prevailed before 1969.

2.

On some other points which he indicates were discussed at the IMT caucus held at the time of the IEC plenum, Comrade Barzman is less likely to draw applause from members of the LTF.

He sees "three sets of factors" behind the "centrifugal tendencies" in the international today: (1) The "reflection" in some Trotskyist organizations of the "uneven development of the class struggle in different countries" causing the consciousness of some revolutionists to lag behind events (for instance, right now, "the consciousness of revolutionaries in a country which has never experienced a prerevolutionary situation will have greater difficulty grasping the concept of dual power"); (2) the existence of a "transition period" in which "various national Trotskyist traditions" had "more or less developed in isolation from each other" and in which they tended to extrapolate "the experience of one section into a world panacea, or to retreat toward theories of the exceptionalism of a particular section..."; (3) the deeper penetration of the mass movement today, which "aggravates the degree to which the sections of the F.I. are susceptible to various programmatic deviations." (p. 18.)

In Comrade Barzman's opinion—and in this he is obviously repeating what the top leaders of the IMT say—these factors require not only maintaining the level of democratic centralism practiced under the guidance of Trotsky and Cannon, but going "over and beyond" it.

As he puts it, "For the IMT, the present period of growth of the F.I. necessarily involves a tension between powerful centrifugal tendencies and a deliberate and permanent struggle for increased democratic centralization." (p. 18.)

Comrade Barzman has expressed in a single sentence the essence of the IMT's approach to the need for discussion on the broadest possible basis in the Fourth International. The IMT concept is that the political differences that arose over the innovations introduced at the 1969 world congress can be contained and rolled back by organizational measures sanctioned through super centralization of the Fourth International.

The argumentation in favor of this approach, based on the "three sets of factors," is not at all new. The leaders of the IMT advanced the "three sets of factors"—a combination of particularist causes—as their explanation for the resistance that flared within the Fourth International and sympathizing organizations to the turn taken at the Ninth World Congress, particularly the resistance to their disastrous guerrillaist or "armed struggle" line in Latin America.

The "three sets of factors" constituted the backbone of the arguments advanced by the IMT proponents of "armed

struggle" in Latin America against those critical of their course. And, of course, they advocated greater international centralization as a sovereign remedy for those who foresaw the setbacks the Fourth International would suffer as a result of putting into practice a guerrillaist line in Latin America.

If the IMT now undertakes a thorough self-criticism of the guerrillaist line that was responsible for the rise of oppositional currents within the Fourth International and organizations sympathetic to its aims, what happens to the arguments for hyper centralization based on the "three sets of factors"? The least that can be said is that they would be deprived of the political reason that led the leadership of the IMT to advance them.

And what happens to the "three sets of factors" as such? Must they be entered on the record as merely three sets of red herrings that were used to prejudice comrades against giving the arguments of the minority a fair hearing?

To dispose of them in that way would be a mistake in my opinion. The "three sets of factors" do have a basis in reality. However, what they explain is the opposite of what the leaders of the IMT intended.

They help account, at least partially, for the origin of the ultraleft deviation that took the form of a guerrillaist course in Latin America, among other things. The "three sets of factors" also help account for the fact that the costly error in orientation was approved by a majority of delegates at the Ninth World Congress and again at the tenth.

Grave errors of this kind *are* ascribable to the quality of leadership of the Fourth International and the political level of the rank and file, who in some countries have still not totally freed themselves from the influence of the political milieu to which they were first attracted upon becoming radicalized. These factors in turn find their ultimate explanation in the concrete development of the class struggle and the historical role played in it by the Fourth International.

If they are studied in the light of these considerations, the "three sets of factors" acquire relevance in a way that Comrade Barzman, it is clear, did not foresee.

The fact that Comrade Barzman still advances the "three sets of factors" as justification for the IMT position thus leads one to suspect that the promised self-criticism will hardly be thoroughgoing. In particular it is dubious that the self-criticism will extend to the IMT's application in Europe of the Ninth World Congress turn, although this was a completely logical correlative to the application of the line in Latin America and stands or falls with it.

To judge from the factional polemics that Comrade Barzman includes in his "evaluation," the IMT proposes to go all out in defending the famous turn as a whole, particularly the efforts to apply it in Europe. Mistakes and setbacks will be blamed on leaderships of national sections (Portugal) as in the case of the application of the line in Latin America. The same argumentation ("three sets of factors") will be used to account for the opposition to the IMT's line in Europe (and its emulation elsewhere in the world). The same internationalist organizational cure-all will be whooped up—super centralization.

3.

"A large part of the IEC was taken up by a number of organizational disputes," Comrade Barzman reports. "They included: the IT question, the split in Mexico, the

Lambertist affair, and problems of disciplined functioning." (p. 17.)

This is inaccurate. The "Lambertist affair" was not on the agenda of the IEC; it was not discussed at any of the sessions of the IEC; and it was not discussed in the subsequent meeting of the United Secretariat. All the more interesting, then, is Comrade Barzman's "evaluation" of the discussion on this question, which, we deduce, took place at the IMT caucus he mentions.

1. From Comrade Barzman we learn how, in its sessions, the IMT presents the SWP's views concerning the overtures made by the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International:

"For the SWP leadership, it seems that discussions with the OCRFI, with a view toward fusion, are the immediate and key priority." (p. 22.)

"Unfortunately, the SWP leadership has not given any explanation of how a rapprochement with the Lambertists would fit into an overall perspective on the stages of expansion of the F.I. The only stated explanation for the SWP leadership's interest in the OCRFI is the OCRFI's request for a discussion on Portugal. The fact that the Lambertist's position on Portugal is close to that of the SWP leadership is possibly not unrelated. This, however, is an unacceptable criterion for determining priorities. The fact that an organization agrees with the SWP leadership on one of the points in dispute in the F.I. gives no reliable indication on what role that organization could be called upon to play in the building of the F.I." (p. 23.)

"Further, the OCRFI wishes to discuss only with the SWP and not with the French section." (p. 23.)

The facts are different. The OCRFI made its opening approach not to the SWP but to the United Secretariat. This was in May 1973. After being rebuffed, the OCRFI tried again in October 1973, modifying its first approach along the lines indicated by the United Secretariat. The United Secretariat then decided to defer action until after the Tenth World Congress. A member of the United Secretariat belonging to the French section was assigned to write a friendly reply, but this was never done. It was only after failing to hear from the United Secretariat that the OCRFI turned to the SWP in September 1974. The SWP thereupon acted as an intermediary to again bring the overture of the OCRFI to the attention of the United Secretariat. The United Secretariat then authorized a meeting with leaders of the OCRFI.

Thus the OCRFI made its first approach a year before the outbreak of the Portuguese revolution. Moreover, the differences within the Fourth International over certain issues in the Portuguese revolution did not arise until the spring of 1975, two years later. Did the OCRFI foresee in 1973 that it would agree with the SWP on certain aspects of the coming Portuguese revolution? It would seem worthwhile to establish friendly relations with a leadership of such prescience.

Let us also note the fact that the OCRFI was flexible enough to leave it up to the United Secretariat to decide on the agenda of the questions to be discussed.

As for the assertion that the OCRFI does not wish to discuss with the French section, the situation is just the opposite. It is the leadership of the French section that does not wish to discuss with the OCRFI. Comrade Barzman himself indicates the reasons, as we shall see.

We can only conclude the following: Either (a) Comrade Barzman has departed from the truth in indicating the

discussion on this point at the IMT caucus; or (b) the IMT in its deliberations paid scant heed to the actual development of this opening for the Fourth International. In either case the display of extreme factionalism makes a mockery of the IMT's insistence that it is only a "tendency."

So much for Comrade Barzman's "evaluation" of the OCRFI's turn toward the United Secretariat.

2. The ostensible reasons for the IMT's continued insistence on rebuffing the overtures of the OCRFI are formulated by Comrade Barzman as follows:

"At present, there are a few signs that the OCRFI has modified its tactics toward the F.I. This has to do mainly with its request to participate in the F.I.'s internal discussion. However, physical attacks by the OCRFI against comrades of the F.I. have continued without ever being disavowed, and the F.I. is still seen as an organism whose function is to organize capitulations to Stalinism and imperialism." (p. 23.)

Because of the OCRFI's attitude, Comrade Barzman continues, "the F.I. [the IMT caucus—*J.H.*] has decided to begin now to educate the OCRFI as to the democratic centralist nature of the F.I. and the need for a loyal attitude toward all of its component parts. This is why the F.I. has demanded that all physical attacks and slanderous accusations cease before discussions can proceed."

In view of the IMT's decision to educate the leadership of the OCRFI by refusing to discuss with them until they publicly state that they have given up beating members of the Fourth International, why did Comrade Barzman assert that the OCRFI does not wish to discuss with the French section?

As for the charges levelled against the OCRFI, the SWP has certainly done its best to ascertain their substance and, if possible, to remove them as obstacles to a political dialogue. An inquiry commission has been set up to determine whether the OCRFI really follows a policy of organizing physical attacks against members of other working-class organizations. (The OCRFI vigorously denies the accusation and is cooperating with the inquiry commission in this matter.) Comrade Barzman nevertheless says—no doubt repeating what he heard in the IMT caucus—that "physical attacks by the OCRFI against comrades of the F.I. have continued . . ." Which comrades? Where? When? Why aren't the cases publicized in the press of the Fourth International if they have a factual basis?

As for the use of slanderous accusations and uncomradely epithets, the OCRFI has changed on this—more than a year ago. That change alone ought to warrant a comradely response on the part of the IMT; that is, if the leadership of the IMT is interested in taking advantage of an opening that could give a significant impetus to the growth of the Fourth International.

The truth is that the IMT has adopted a sectarian course of rejecting the overtures made by the OCRFI, utilizing such arguments as can be made to sound plausible.

3. The arguments advanced up to now in favor of that sectarian course have worn so thin and become so untenable that the leadership of the IMT has decided to do something about it. Consequently, judging from Comrade Barzman's presentation, the caucus developed a new set of arguments to justify the IMT's sectarian stance. Here it is:

"...the OCRFI is not the only possible group that the F.I. can orient toward. There are other organizations which claim to be Trotskyists (the Pabloites, Healy's I.C., Lutte

Ouvrière's network, I.S.'s network, Spartacists, etc.). There are various important centrist groupings: (French PSU, Italian Lotta Continua, various currents in Latin America, etc.). There are layers of militants in the far left, the CPs, the SPs, or just emerging in the course of struggles, whom we expect to win to our ideas. What approach we should take toward each of these organizations and layers, and in what order we should approach them, must be part of an overall conception of the stages of building the F.I. Otherwise, the forces of the F.I. could become dispersed in empirical efforts to achieve limited gains while missing the bigger opportunities." (p. 22.)

In short, in place of a real existing opportunity that might soon lead to other real opportunities, the IMT points toward dozens of possibilities in the future that may or may not materialize. The great merit of these possibilities is that no matter how imaginary they may be at present they can at least be put in strict alphabetical order.

The new rationalization for refusing to give up a sectarian stance towards the OCRFI thus consists of a schema including the following categories:

- (a) All organizations that claim to be Trotskyist.
- (b) All organizations that are clearly centrist.
- (c) All groups, grouplets, or vaguer formations designated by the IMT as "far left" and thereby entitled to a comradely approach.

On the basis of these categories, "stages of building the F.I." are to be thought up. We will have "approaches" and an "order" for applying them, enabling the Fourth International to veer in various political directions in a predetermined sequence. Like a computer program, the schema will show with mathematical precision what groups "the F.I. can orient toward" and when.

Unfortunately, the schema has a defect. It leaves out the most important category. What about organizations or formations that on their own initiative orient toward the Fourth International?

Consistent supporters of the IMT schema will, of course, agree that such cases are to be ruled out; in particular the case of the OCRFI, whom the IMT leadership had in mind in drawing up the schema.

4. Evidently the IMT caucus discussed more realistic reasons for rejecting the overtures of the OCRFI.

"For the IMT," Comrade Barzman informs us, "the question of our attitude toward the OCRFI must be posed within the context of discussing what are the next steps the FI must take to advance toward the building of a mass revolutionary International. Two goals must be achieved: (1) the strengthening of the present F.I. must enable it to have a decisive weight within the future mass International; (2) various existing organizations must be worked on so that they can be transformed and integrated into the F.I. without this changing the character of the F.I." (p. 23.)

This is an enlightening passage on the "context." The IMT is following a policy in relation to the growth of the Fourth International that is determined by two criteria. (1) In any projected expansion, the IMT leadership must be guaranteed in advance that they will retain "decisive weight." (2) Any proposed candidate organization must be "transformed" in advance so as to further guarantee the IMT leadership having "decisive weight" in the future mass-sized Fourth International.

Thus the IMT's course in relation to growth opportunities for the Fourth International are determined by narrow factional considerations that do not necessarily

coincide with the interests of the Fourth International as a whole. Under sectarian guidelines of this kind, the chief question to be weighed in considering possible rapprochement with another revolutionary organization is, How would the gain in numbers affect the IMT's guarantee of "decisive weight" for an indefinite time?

The true reasons for the IMT's attitude toward the OCRFI—the three years of stalling and of rapping the knuckles knocking at the door—begin to come to the surface.

5. The IMT's policy has its counterpart within the Fourth International, of course. Comrade Barzman alludes to it:

"This means that the F.I. must have a priority on developing its organization and external intervention while maintaining its internal discussion and conducting selected public debates. *The success of operations with other groups will depend on the prior establishment of a firm basis for the democratic centralist functioning of the F.I.* As the F.I. achieves major gains in different countries, and as it demonstrates its ability to manage fruitful internal discussion, groups such as the Lambertists may begin to change their attitude and help to build the F.I." (p. 23, emphasis added.)

The IMT requires a "democratic centralist" structure within the Fourth International that goes "over and beyond" anything practiced under the guidance of Trotsky and Cannon. And this hyper centralization must be achieved before the United Secretariat can attempt operations with other groups.

We now see the "problématique" within which the IMT sets the question of regroupments or fusions. Any operations with other groups of some size and influence must be deferred until the IMT leaders have taken care of their own base; that is, have established such a strong position of command within the Fourth International as to eliminate all possibility of an effective internal political challenge. They do not consider their present majority sufficient. They want *guarantees* that it can never be altered whether by the accumulation of new forces or by new political lineups among the present ranks of the Fourth International.

The IMT's factional guidelines clearly constitute an obstacle to building the Fourth International. They should be rejected out of hand.

May 11, 1976

Notes on the Reply of the SWP PC Concerning Invitations to the SWP Convention

by Alan Jones

Prefatory Note:

As I only received the reply of the SWP Political Committee to the United Secretariat resolutions after my arrival in the United States I hope comrades will excuse the note form of these comments. Furthermore evidently, the conditions under which these comments are written means that they can only be a personal expression of opinion as a member of the United Secretariat but cannot in any way engage the positions of the United Secretariat as such—still less the IMT which, contrary to impressions given in the SWP Political Committee Reply, has not, and could not have, a position on the issue of the OCRFI or on invitations to the SWP Convention. However, as a participant in the meetings of the United Secretariat, and as a supporter of the resolutions passed by the U. Sec. on the issue of the invitations to the SWP Convention, I hope that comrades of the SWP will read these comments with care.

The chief issues

The reply of the SWP Political Committee raises three questions which, while interrelated, are nevertheless not at all identical issues.

i. The SWP Political Committee Reply raises an issue of substance in relation to tactics, i.e., whether it is a correct

policy or not to invite the OCRFI, Lutte Ouvrière and other organisations to congresses of the Fourth International, and to the convention of the SWP.

ii. The SWP PC Reply makes an accusation against the United Secretariat—that its decisions do not apply to all parts of the International equally but instead apply only to a minority faction, the LTF, within the Fourth International.

iii. The SWP PC Reply raises an issue of organisational principle—whether majority decisions which are considered incorrect should nevertheless be carried out and which bodies, national and international, have the right to take various decisions.

We will deal with each of these points in turn. However, before dealing with the major points of substance, it is necessary to get out of the way some small points on the presentation of the material in IIB No. 9 in 1976.

a. What is this strange body "the majority of the United Secretariat," consistently referred to in the Bulletin, which allegedly adopts resolutions? The statements and resolutions are those of the United Secretariat even if only passed by a majority vote. There is no body "the majority of the SWP PC" even where there is a divided vote and neither is there a body "the majority of the U. Sec."

b. It is extremely misleading to present the two resolutions of the United Secretariat under the same title of "Relations with Trotskyist Organisations, or Groups

Claiming to be Trotskyist, Which are Outside of the Fourth International." The first resolution printed is part of a discussion initiated in the United Secretariat before the issue of invitations to this year's SWP Convention was even raised. The resolution was specifically commissioned at a previous U. Sec. The second resolution, on the invitations, was a separate resolution to deal with a particular situation and the two resolutions were not in any sense prepared together.

c. The Reply of the SWP Political Committee continually refers to the "majority of the United Secretariat"/"minority of the United Secretariat" in a way that would lead anyone to consider these categorisations as referring to the IMT and LTF (e.g. p. 10 and p. 11). In fact, as the comrades of the SWP PC are quite aware, not merely does the IMT not have a position on the OCRFI but, as a tendency, it will not have a position on the OCRFI. Whether the LTF, as opposed to simply the SWP, has a position is unclear. Furthermore, on a number of issues the fact that relations with the OCRFI are not a tendency question has been clearly indicated by the fact that voting in the United Secretariat has gone across tendency lines.

Turning to the major questions

Should the OCRFI, Lutte Ouvrière, the WSL, etc., be invited to congresses of sections of the Fourth International and to the convention of the SWP?

This issue is evidently one of tactics—there is no principle or theoretical position of revolutionary Marxism which gives us an answer to this question of whether or not to invite the OCRFI, Lutte Ouvrière, etc. As regards the concrete position to be taken there appears to be unanimity in the International on this question as regards most of the organisations involved. All sections and leaders of the International who have expressed themselves on the question favour inviting Lutte Ouvrière, the WSL, and a number of smaller organisations to all congresses of sections of the Fourth International, and to the convention of the SWP. Disputes in relation to these organisations have not at all developed on the point of whether or not to invite them but only in relation to the procedures, and organisational principles, invoked by the SWP.

The only organisation on which a difference exists on whether they should be invited to congresses of sections of the International and conventions of the SWP is in relation to the case of the OCRFI. The reasons for this are that the OCRFI, in distinction from all the other organisations invited, does not in any way consider the Fourth International to be either Trotskyist or revolutionary. Furthermore this is not merely a matter of words but affects the whole way in which the OCRFI acts in relation to the Fourth International and its sections. Whereas Lutte Ouvrière, for example, despite many differences with the F.I., engages in many joint campaigns with the French section of the Fourth International, has supported a vote for Fourth International candidates in elections, etc., the OCI, the main component of the OCRFI, refuses in almost all cases to engage in any joint activity with the French section of the Fourth International, calls for a vote for the Stalinists and Social Democrats in elections rather than for the LCR, etc. Furthermore these differences are not accidental but flow from completely different concepts of how to relate to the Fourth International in the building of

the revolutionary party. Lutte Ouvrière, for example, summarises its position as follows: "Lutte Ouvrière have always considered themselves as an integrant (sic) part of the revolutionary movement, as a fraction of a revolutionary party that remains to be built. We have always tried to act as often as possible in common with the other tendencies of the revolutionary movement." (Lutte Ouvrière May 1976—reproduced in IIB No. 8 in 1976.) Lutte Ouvrière see the building of the revolutionary party as certainly involving a strong political battle between tendencies, but nevertheless as proceeding via a unification of forces, including themselves and the sections of the Fourth International, into a mass revolutionary International. While such unification may not be possible or even desirable immediately, it is nevertheless a strategic goal. For the OCRFI the perspective is totally different. For them the Fourth International is *not* a revolutionary organisation but an obstacle to the building of the revolutionary party. The strategic line for building the revolutionary party and the revolutionary international for the OCRFI does not lie through eventual unification with the chief forces of the Fourth International but through the *destruction* of these organisations. They do not consider, as do Lutte Ouvrière, that the majority of the forces of the Fourth International are revolutionaries, but instead consider them counterrevolutionaries, centrists, agents of imperialism and Stalinism—the characterisations sometimes vary but the common thread that the Fourth International is not Trotskyist and revolutionary remains. The practical attitude of the OCRFI flows from this strategic perspective—evidently it is necessary to take a very different attitude to an organisation which has to be smashed than to one which eventually you are likely to unify with. For the Fourth International's part, while the political positions of the OCRFI are not necessarily a barrier to discussing with it, it is evident that different tactics have to be pursued in relation to an organisation such as Lutte Ouvrière and to one such as the OCRFI. Unfortunately the SWP PC reply to the United Secretariat refuses to take account of any of these differences and consistently places an organisation such as Lutte Ouvrière and the OCRFI on the same basis. Two apparent interconnected arguments are produced by the SWP PC for this.

The first argument is that what is decisive is the direction of *development* of the OCRFI—"In the political arena, the *trend of development* can acquire primary importance, for it means that a change is occurring that can lead to something qualitatively new." (p. 6). This argument however is confused between two different things. Naturally it is important to know in what direction an organisation is moving, but we also need to know where *at a given point* that organisation has actually arrived at. It *might* be the case that in the future the OCRFI can alter but we also need to know where it is *now*. It may be that "something qualitatively new" will develop, and in that case the Fourth International must adjust its position accordingly, but on the OCRFI's basic political attitude it is also necessary to know whether there is anything qualitatively new yet.

This confused argument of the SWP Political Committee becomes worse when it is compounded with a straightforward factual error made in its reply. The reply states that the various attacks made on the Fourth International by

the OCRFI, and cited in the U. Sec. resolution, "refers to the period before the OCRFI took a new look at the United Secretariat and the organisations in sympathy with its aims." (p. 11) However the statements of the OCRFI referred to are *not* taken from the period prior to the OCRFI's approaches to the FI, but refer to *recent* statements of the OCRFI press made long *after* their approaches to the FI. The September 1975 issue of *La Verité* talks of "the 'United Secretariat', the destroyer of the Fourth International", the Winter 1975-76 issue of *Marxist Bulletin* (organ of the British affiliates of the OCRFI), states that "Pabloism destroyed the Fourth International through adaptation to Stalinism in 1953 (p. 26), that since then "Pabloism has passed through several distinct stages of further degeneration" (p. 6), and concludes, for example, that in relation to at least one section of the Fourth International "the distance between the IMG and the Transitional Programme . . . is a gulf which is unbridgeable" (p. 28). In short *no* basic shift in the positions of the OCRFI on the nature of the Fourth International and its sections has taken place. There is nothing "qualitatively new" on this front which has developed. There is an evident contradiction between these positions and the approach of the OCRFI for discussions, and we should note that fact in determining our attitude, but there is nothing new which would lead to placing Lutte Ouvrière and the OCRFI on the same basis as regards their attitude to the Fourth International, and its sections. There is no change in the basic political characterisation the OCRFI gives of the Fourth International.

Simply establishing the fact that the OCRFI has a very different view of the Fourth International, and how to relate to it, than does Lutte Ouvrière does not of course in itself determine whether the OCRFI should be invited to conferences of sections of the International. It does however indicate clearly that there are *different* problems involved in dealing with the OCRFI than with Lutte Ouvrière or the WSL. These differences the SWP PC reply simply fails to deal with—or even prefers to ignore. It is my *personal* opinion, expressed in votes in the United Secretariat, that the OCRFI should be invited to congresses of sections, and to the convention of the SWP, and that the United Secretariat should have attended the last congress of the OCI. However, the United Secretariat has a different position. The observers of the SWP who attend the United Secretariat, and the LTF members of the U. Sec. have a different position still. As in any body the decision is taken by a majority vote. It is perfectly possible that the wrong decision is taken but that is neither a basis for not carrying it out and it is painful to be in a minority but majority decisions still have to be implemented, and it is absurd to pretend that the OCRFI does not pose particular problems which are *not* the same as those of relations with Lutte Ouvrière or with the WSL.

Are the resolutions of the United Secretariat applicable to only a minority faction or are they applied to all members of the International?

In making the very grave charge that the United Secretariat applies the general principles it has laid down only to the LTF, and not to all members of the FI, the SWP PC reply takes up the issue of relations with the Pablo grouping. Here, so we are informed, the positions of the United Secretariat are clearly revealed as factional. Unfortunately the argumentation of the SWP Political Committee is quite false.

Firstly with regard to the general case, the SWP PC reply states that the case of the Pablo current has been left out of the U. Sec. resolution for "unexplained reasons" (p. 6). In reality the reasons are exactly those given by the SWP PC itself. The Pablo current does *not* consider itself Trotskyist and therefore *obviously* is not dealt with in a resolution on "Relations with Trotskyist Organisations, or Groups claiming to be Trotskyist, Which are Outside of the Fourth International." Relations with the Pablo group fall under a somewhat different problem of relations with centrist organisations, or organisations which may be revolutionary but are not Trotskyists, which undoubtedly the U. Sec. must rapidly take a position on but are naturally not covered in the present text. It is quite false however to therefore claim, as does the SWP PC reply, that the fact that the Pablo group is not dealt with in the U. Sec. resolution "shows quite convincingly that the method followed in the motion is not applied by the majority of the United Secretariat in *all* cases but only in *some*, and that the choice is motivated by factional considerations." (p. 7).

Secondly, to take the particular case of the IMG referred to, an extremely "incomplete" (to put it mildly) and therefore completely *misleading* and *false* account is given of "relations" between the IMG and the Pablo current. The facts are as follows: Pablo was in Britain. As always with anyone who asks for a meeting with the IMG and is from the labour movement we agreed to a meeting with him—in the past the IMG has had such meetings with a representative of Lotta Continua, members of People's Democracy, members of Bandiera Roja, etc. The format of these meetings is always the same—we ask questions, and we defend the positions of the Fourth International or policies pursued by other sections. We never have more than one meeting, and, as far as the IMG are concerned, the aim is to obtain information for ourselves and to maintain, where appropriate, cordial relations. We never meet a member of an organisation when we know the national section involved would object, and if the organisation raises "sensitive" relations we ensure that tendency and factional questions are safeguarded. Thus at the meeting with Pablo we were careful to ensure that a member of the LTF attended the meeting, we simply asked Pablo questions, and we did not discuss any internal affairs of the International. We informed the United Secretariat of the meeting and asked for further guidance and a decision on what to do. In that sense this meeting was no different at all to that of the SWP in its initial meeting with the OCI. When approached by the OCI for a meeting the SWP agreed to one meeting, listened to what the OCI proposed, and then informed the United Secretariat and asked for its position on the proposals made by the OCI. No one has ever attacked the SWP for this particular course of action—which in fact was entirely correct. This is precisely what the IMG did. It is quite absurd to attempt to portray this situation of the IMG as comparable to the SWP inviting the OCRFI to its convention. There is absolutely no evidence whatsoever from this fact that the United Secretariat is applying one criteria to supporters of the IMT and another to supporters of the LTF.

The Organisational Principles Involved

Considered purely in itself, "in isolation", the question of whether the OCRFI, Lutte Ouvrière, the WSL, etc. attend the SWP convention is of course an extremely minor

point—certainly the Fourth International and the SWP will not perish depending on whether or not a correct position is taken on this concrete issue. However, the basic organisational principles which are involved are profoundly important. To produce the cadres necessary to lead the revolution, the building of revolutionary organisations of a definite type are required. Questions of the basic character of democratic centralism and organisational issues are part of the most basic politics of Marxism and Leninism. In that sense questions of democratic centralism are part of the *programmatically* positions of revolutionary Marxism. Whether the OCRFI does or does not attend the SWP convention will not decide the historical fate of the working class. Whether an actual revolutionary international exists, or on the contrary the organisational framework of the Fourth International is destroyed, *will* be a decisive question in the fate of humanity. It was not for a trivial foible that Trotsky considered it his greatest task to ensure the organisation and continuity of an international revolutionary party and that he defended this principle, and defended it to the point of a split, against everyone who failed to see the absolute necessity for such a revolutionary International. Much as the Fourth International is attached to every member, section, and fraternal organisation, it is clear that it would be necessary to break also with anyone who attempted to break up the International as a democratic centralist organisation of the type created by Trotsky. What is at issue in relation to the OCRFI and other invitations is precisely this basic question of international democratic centralism—not directly in the case of the SWP of the organisational questions involved, because of the Voorhis Act, but nevertheless the essential theoretical issues. To take the points in turn:

(i) In relation to the specific issues of democratic centralism involved in invitations to sections' conventions, the SWP Political Committee reply deals *only* with the invitation to the OCRFI—which is an international organisation and not therefore an issue to be decided by the French, British, etc., sections as it is not a question of *national* tactics. However, the Political Committee makes no comment on the issue of the invitations to national organisations. Indeed, in its section on “the requests made by the United Secretariat” (p. 13) it specifically does not mention point ii of the United Secretariat motion which deals with the rights of national sections. These invitations, made without the consultation and approval of the national sections of the Fourth International in the relevant countries, constitute, as the United Secretariat resolution points out, “violation of the right of national sections to determine tactical relations with groups in their own countries.” Does the SWP Political Committee consider that an error was made in sending these resolutions without obtaining the agreement of the national sections? Does it consider that it was correct? This is an extremely important issue with extremely important implications for the entire state of the International. Unfortunately no statement on this is made in the SWP Political Committee reply. This issue must however be taken up by the convention and a clear position taken on it. (For information only on a closed issue see the correspondence of the SWP & IMG Political Committees on the WSL.)

(ii) In relation to the OCRFI the SWP Political Committee reply does not take a clear position on one simple

question: Do the World Congress, the IEC, and the United Secretariat, i.e. the elected international leading bodies of the Fourth International, have the right to determine relations of the Fourth International, and its national sections, with international political organisations such as the OCRFI? That these international leading bodies do have such rights is such an elementary point in relation to international democratic centralism that until now it has not been challenged by anyone whether in the IMT or LTF—see below, for example, for the position taken by the LSA-LSO. The SWP Political Committee reply, however, takes no position on the right of the elected leading international bodies of the FI to determine relations with an international organisation such as the OCRFI nor of the statutes which were passed unanimously at the last World Congress. Again the convention must clarify this issue.

Taking these two points in turn:

The Rights of National Sections

It is not necessary to go into all the arguments here as these are well known and are dealt with below.

International Democratic Centralism

In dealing with international democratic centralism the SWP naturally cannot be bound by decisions of the Fourth International because it cannot be a section due to reactionary laws. Nevertheless the general theoretical positions taken by the SWP, and the organisational issues involved, are of importance for the Fourth International itself.

In relation to the question of the binding character of decisions taken by the elected leading bodies of the Fourth International the SWP appears to vacillate between two positions. The first is an argument which if defended seriously, is not directed against specifically international aspects of democratic centralism but against democratic centralism itself. While never explicitly spelt out the structure of this argument is clear. It says that the decision to invite the OCRFI is a correct position as regards substance. The fact that the United Secretariat has taken a position that it should not be invited is a “formal” question. The point of substance takes precedence over the formal question and therefore the correct thing to do is not to carry out the decision.

Unfortunately for this mode of argument such a position is not one directed against international democratic centralism but against any democratic centralism at all. Inevitably *any* organisation will take at some point incorrect positions. Furthermore it is quite likely that a minority in these circumstances will have the correct position. However it is an absolutely elementary principle that nevertheless the whole organisation, including the minority, has to apply the line decided by the majority. It is not exactly hard to imagine what would be the reaction of the SWP if a minority decided to apply its *own* line and not that of leading bodies, on the grounds that in substance it was correct and the fact that there was a “formal” position in favour of another decision by leading bodies! Such a position would be a complete denial of democratic centralism. To argue that invitations to the OCRFI are correct in substance, and that decisions by international leading bodies are merely “formal” ques-

tions, and that points of substance take priority over "formality", is not a position which can be seriously defended and certainly has nothing to do with specifically *international* democratic centralism.

The second argument which appears to be used by the SWP Political Committee is that the elected leading bodies of the Fourth International have, under democratic centralism, no right to take decisions which are binding on national sections. The converse view, that international leading bodies do have the right to take decisions binding on national sections, is presumably part of the "super-centralist" conceptions which the majority of the Fourth International is alleged to hold.

In reality, however, this argument of the SWP leadership is not directed against the Majority of the International but is directed against Lenin and Trotsky, and their positions on international democratic centralism, and against the very statutes of the Fourth International which supporters of the LTF have repeatedly voted for and which the leaders of the SWP have expressed their agreement with. The position on the binding nature of decisions of international leading bodies was quite clearly established with the founding of the Communist International. Point 17 of the Terms of Admissions into the Communist International, a point personally drafted by Lenin, warns against attempts to ignore "the diversity of conditions in which the respective parties have to fight and work," but states absolutely unambiguously:

"All decisions of the Communist International's congresses, and of its Executive Committee are binding on all affiliated parties."

There is, of course, room for serious discussion regarding the forms and application of international democratic centralism—practical experience both of the Third and Fourth Internationals, for example, making it clear that the International leading bodies should not have the right to replace leaderships or determine national tactics. Furthermore, absolutely obvious differences apply between a mass revolutionary international such as the Third International as compared to a relatively small organisation such as the Fourth International has been in its history. Despite these particular differences, however, the essential principles are quite clear and do not at all refer merely to a mass revolutionary organisation such as the Third International. The position that elected international leading bodies cannot take decisions binding on national sections is in absolutely clear opposition to the position which Trotsky himself took. Clause IV of the statutes adopted at the 1938 founding convention of the Fourth International, the Congress prepared under Trotsky's personal guidance, clearly states:

"The *internal structure* of the International, on the local, national, and world scales, is determined by the principles and practice of democratic centralism.

"The sections are required to observe the decisions and resolutions of the International Conference, and, in its absence, of the International Executive Committee, represented during the intervals between its meetings by the International Secretariat—while nevertheless retaining the right of appeal before the next higher bodies until the next International Conference." The current statutes of the Fourth International, which were passed *unanimously* at the last World Congress, maintain fully the essential position of Lenin and Trotsky. In contradiction to any view that the highest body of a party is its *national*

convention and *national* leading bodies, and that decisions of international bodies are not binding, Point 5 of the statutes clearly states:

"In all questions involving the national sections, the World Congress serves as the final body of appeal and decision." Point 8 of the statutes states:

"In case of differences between a section and the World Congress, it is the duty of the section to loyally carry out the decisions made by the majority at the World Congress, no matter how serious the differences were or what the position of the delegation was. It retains the right to appeal decisions it disagrees with to the next regular or special World Congress."

In regard to the IEC, Point 12 of the statutes states:

"Decisions of the International Executive Committee as to the interpretation of a political line decided on at a World Congress, or its practical implementation, are binding on all the sections. They can appeal decisions they disagree with to the World Congress, but in the meantime they must abide by them."

Points 14 and 15, drawing on the experience of the Third and Fourth Internationals, clearly specify the type of action which may or may not be taken by the IEC, but these in no way contradict or overturn point 12.

In respect to the United Secretariat, Point 19 of the statutes states:

"In the interval between sessions of the International Executive Committee, the United Secretariat acts in its name and with its power except that it cannot organise subsecretariats or commissions. Its decisions are binding on sections. Appeal can be made to the International Executive Committee, but pending consideration of the appeal, decisions must be carried out."

Naturally, the statutes of the International specify *which* decisions cannot be taken by international leading bodies (e.g., removing an elected leadership of a section, determining national tactics, etc.), and specify what types of disciplinary action can and cannot be taken. But basic revolutionary theory, the positions of the great revolutionary founders of the Communist Movement, and the current statutes of the Fourth International, which were adopted a mere two years ago and were supported by the SWP, all make it clear that no serious case can be made for the position that international leading bodies cannot take decisions binding on national sections.

Furthermore, until recently, this position, including the authority of the United Secretariat to take decisions binding on national sections on relations with international organisations, was *not* challenged by even members of the LTF. We may note, for example, the position taken as recently as February 1976 by leading LTF member Art Young: "They [the IMT leaders] criticized the SWP for inviting the OCRFI to send representatives to its convention in August. Then they passed motions at the October Secretariat meeting barring sections or organizations in political solidarity with the Fourth International, from also inviting the OCRFI to any of their gatherings, or from taking any initiatives towards the OCRFI. *That is why there is no OCRFI representative here at our convention; we think that both we and the OCRFI lose something by their absence.*" (A New Opening for Building the Fourth International—LSA/LSO IIB Volume 4, No. 1; page 5, my emphasis.) Here cde. Young takes an entirely correct and principled attitude on democratic centralism—he expresses strongly his disagreement with a position taken,

but nevertheless, the decision is carried out. This is entirely in line with the statutes of the Fourth International, for which cde. Young himself voted, which to quote again state: "In the intervals between sessions of the International Executive Committee, the United Secretariat acts in its name and with its powers except that it cannot organise subsecretariats or commissions. *Its decisions are binding on the sections.* Appeal can be made to the International Executive Committee, *but pending consideration of the appeal, decisions must be carried out.*" (Point 19 of the statutes, my emphasis.) Not merely are these statutes quite unambiguous but cde. Young quite clearly accepted the authority of the United Secretariat to decide on this question of relations with the OCRFI even although, as is his perfect right, he was in disagreement with the particular decision taken. Perhaps by now Comrade Young may have "corrected" his position on the rights of the United Secretariat, discovered Trotsky was a "super-centralist," that Lenin had a wrong position on international democratic centralism, etc., etc.

In the United States it may be, of course, that some comrades in the SWP no longer agree with the statutes which they indicated their support for less than two years ago. It may be the case that the SWP leadership considers that one Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov had a non-Leninist concept of democratic centralism and that Trotsky was a "super-centralist" opponent of international democratic centralism. However it would greatly clarify debate in the International if everyone who held such a position came out openly and admitted that their real opposition is not to

the positions of Mandel or Frank but to the positions of Lenin and Trotsky.

Conclusion

That the SWP does not agree with the United Secretariat decisions on relations with the OCRFI there is no doubt. It may well be the case that many members of the Fourth International do not agree either. Undoubtedly at one time or another every member of every section of the International is faced with a decision he, she, or it does not agree with. But democratic centralism is based on the firm political belief that no matter what particular mistakes are made today, nevertheless, in the long run the revolutionary organisation will correct its position—and that simultaneously arguing for a different course while carrying out the majority decision is the way to fight for that change in position.

It is this which is the political basis of party loyalty which, as the 1965 organisation resolution of the SWP correctly puts it, is the "rock" on which the "party's whole democratic-centralist structure is founded." As members of the world party this is the attitude Trotskyists have to the Fourth International.

For members of the Fourth International the task is clear—to argue, if they consider it necessary, for a change in position of the United Secretariat while simultaneously carrying out its decision. The same political considerations should lead to the SWP accepting the recommendations of the United Secretariat on the invitations to its convention.

Letter from Lutte Ouvrière to United Secretariat

February 10, 1976

Dear Comrades:

In the name of the four organizations that have signed the attached statement, we invite you to participate in an exploratory conference concerning the issues raised in this statement. It will take place Sunday, March 14, in France.

This conference aims at bringing together the various Trotskyist groups that are not satisfied with the international formations in existence at the present time, so that they can consider what international relations could be established between them.

Of course, the content of this appeal is in no way a condition for participation in the conference. All the questions it raises can be broadly discussed.

If, in this context, you wish to meet with us separately prior to the conference in order to discuss our respective positions at leisure, we are more than ready to do so.

If you agree in principle with such a conference, we would appreciate your notifying us as soon as possible so that we can inform you of the practical details in sufficient time.

With internationalist greetings.

Lutte Ouvrière

PUTTING AN END TO THE CRUMBLING OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Nearly forty years after the founding of the Fourth International, the Trotskyist movement is the only one--on an international scale--to refer to the necessity of an independent proletarian political line and organization and to set as its goal the establishment of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, on the level of its basic programmatic formulations.

There are other currents which make more or less explicit references to proletarian revolution--in particular the so-called "state capitalist" groups and their various offshoots. But they never structured themselves on an international scale and have in fact even abandoned the idea. They were never able to elaborate a political line of their own. Most of them define themselves with respect to the Trotskyist movement, out of which the majority of them come.

As for the so-called "Maoist" groups, though they exist in almost every country and though they even have a notable influence in a number of under-developed countries, they represent (that is, when they represent anything at all) populist currents, the aim of which is quite openly to put the working class in the tow of bourgeois interests. When

these organizations are able to develop, their explicit abandonment of the proletarian camp causes them to become organizations representing interests other than those of the proletariat.

The most important assets of the international Trotskyist movement are by far the two following facts: First, it has maintained, at least in its programmatic references, the political continuity of the revolutionary movement, successively embodied in the International Workingmen's Association of Marx and Engels, in the Second International until World War I, in the Communist International of the 1919-1923 period, and ultimately in the Left Opposition and the Fourth International founded by Leon Trotsky. Secondly, it was the only movement to maintain its tradition during a difficult period, against classical reformism, against Stalinism and against the different varieties of "Third-Worldism" despite their Marxist cover.

Thanks to this maintenance of political continuity, today, after decades during which the revolutionary movement had no real influence on the working class movement, new generations can be trained and educated as proletarian revolutionaries.

However, it must be admitted that the Trotskyist movement has not been able to give itself a living, competent and efficient international leadership, recognized as such by all the forces of the Trotskyist movement.

The emergency of an International, of a world party of the revolution, recognized as a leadership by important fractions of the proletariat itself of course largely surpasses the mere problem of the will or the competence of proletarian revolutionary organizations. The emergence of an International is not dependent only upon the ability of the organizations to measure up to the tasks of the hour on the ideological and practical levels.

Nevertheless, the responsibility of the organizations that make up the Trotskyist movement is great, in the sense that today there does not even exist an international leadership corresponding to the present possibilities of the movement and to its development. The inability to maintain the organizational unity of the movement and the inability to train an international leadership recognized by all the Trotskyist groups are of course two aspects of the same problem.

The scattering of the Trotskyist movement is shown by the number of rival international leaderships, each of

which has a variable audience; by the existence of a great number of Trotskyist organizations belonging to none of the existing international bodies; and by the type of relationships existing within each of these international bodies, which are often formal or even fictitious relationships.

No responsible Trotskyist organization, which really wants the Trotskyist movement to play the role that it should, can accept this division, this scattering of groups which is not justified by any programmatic view.

Of course, part of the existing disagreements between Trotskyist groups rest on questions of vital importance.

But it is precisely only inside a Trotskyist movement capable of doing away with sectarianism and ostracism and of allowing a large-scale confrontation of ideas, that the different analyses can be valuably discussed.

Such a confrontation, on the present situation of the Trotskyist movement, on the analysis of the causes of its scattering and on a critical balance-sheet of its evolution since Trotsky's death, appears clearly as a vital and urgent necessity.

No proclamation, address, or unilateral appeal will ever be able to solve a problem concerning the whole of the Trotskyist movement.

It is indispensable that an international framework for such a confrontation be set up. This proposition is not at all incompatible with working toward an International based on the rules of democratic centralism. On the contrary, to try and put an end to the scattered state of the Trotskyist movement is the best way to work toward the building of a democratic and centralized international organization.

Will such an organization be created around one of the existing international organizations? Will it be the fruit of a larger restructuring, and on other bases? The proposed confrontation will have to deal with these questions among others, because there are great differences of opinion as to this problem between the organizations which are members of international bodies and those which are not.

However, the starting point of this discussion must be the undeniable fact that an international organization having a political authority over the whole of the Trotskyist movement does not exist. This remains an aim which must be reached by the organizations existing today. Our task is to build a democratic centralized international organization starting with the presently scattered groups.

The democratic centralism of the international organization to be built will not be suspended in mid-air. It cannot be simply the result of correct statutes. It implies

a basic agreement on the program. It also implies a mutual political trust on the part of the groups making up the international organization as well as the trust of all groups and of all their militants toward the leadership.

This trust between groups and this trust toward the leadership of the other groups do not exist at the present time. Unless one group is able to lead significant struggles of the proletariat in its own country and to prove through action that it deserves the political trust of the other groups, the sectarianism which is characteristic of the relations between Trotskyist organizations today will forever preclude the possibility of doing away with the groups' respective distrust.

The only other way to overcome this distrust is through a loyal confrontation of the points of view and through a common activity. These should be started right away in all possible fields and can be extended afterwards to encompass all the activities of the groups concerned.

In the face of the present sad situation of a scattered Trotskyist movement whose sectarianism presents the first steps toward a solution to be undertaken, the undersigned organizations have taken the initiative to address themselves to the whole of the Trotskyist movement in order to set up an international framework wherein could be discussed the ways and means of creating an international forum within which all the different trends of the Trotskyist movement could coexist.

The framework proposed by the undersigned is not to become a new international body in competition with those already existing.

Neither is it to become a mere discussion group, though it will have to play this role to the fullest, by allowing the participants to outline their points of agreement and disagreement, thus contributing to the clarification needed by the Trotskyist movement.

The undersigned are conscious that the honest confrontation of points of view is just a necessary pre-condition for the establishment of a political program for the world revolutionary struggle of our epoch. Beyond this, the positions of each will have to undergo the test of actual political struggles. The existence of a program adopted by the whole of the movement implies the existence of an international leadership recognized as such by the movement.

The undersigned organizations consider that along with the discussion of the important problems of the Trotskyist movement, the proposed framework must examine the political and organizational help that the various groups can give to each other.

It will be up to the participating groups to determine the degree of collaboration they wish to establish, according to their own needs and to their own political and organizational capacities.

If, beyond the actual differences, the participating organizations deeply want to work toward a closer and closer collaboration; if they feel a concern for the political and organizational problems of the other groups; if they do all they can in order that--beyond the relationships between leaderships--closer and closer ties be established through the exchange of militants, the circulation of discussion material, etc., then, the possibility will

exist for the establishment of relationship based on trust which in the future will form one basis of an ever-growing common discipline; then, leaders accepted by all will be

Paris, January 21, 1976

LUTTE OUVRIERE (France)
UATCI (African Union of Internationalist
Communist Workers) (Africa)
SPARK (United States)
COMBAT OUVRIER (Antilles)

**Letter from United Secretariat
to Lutte Ouvrière**

Brussels, March 9, 1976

Dear Comrades,

We have received your circular letter of February 10, 1976. In our opinion, it raises two separate problems.

The March 14, 1976, meeting clearly involves groups that are not part of an effective international organization. Whatever its weaknesses as an organization -- weaknesses we are aware of -- the Fourth International does exist and is growing and developing. Thus there is no reason for us to participate in an exploratory meeting with comrades who seem to want to persist in denying this obvious fact.

On the other hand, the concerns reflected in your statement "To put an end to the crumbling of the world Trotskyist movement" correspond to our own. When you regret "the inability to maintain the organizational unity of the movement," we agree. But when you add "the inability to select an international leadership recognized by all the Trotskyist groups," and the existence of a "plethora of competing international leaderships with different followings," we venture to make two comments.

First, even in Trotsky's time, in spite of his immense political and moral authority, it was not possible to unite all the groups adhering to revolutionary Marxism. So let us not aim for an impossible unanimity that could turn out to be a pretext to avoid seizing the opportunity to bring an end to needless fragmentation.

It is at least evidence of an unrealistic attitude to put "international leaderships" that represent only a handful of national organizations to which one could add at most some insignificant grouplets, on the same footing as the Fourth International, which is present in more than fifty countries and has thousands of members, clearly the majority of Trotskyists on a world scale. It has succeeded in maintaining its international organizational unity in spite of -- or perhaps we should say as a result of -- frank, impassioned political discussions in its ranks conducted with full regard for proletarian democracy; the right to form tendencies; the refusal to prohibit factions; and the decision to conduct some debates on important questions publicly. This certainly represents a change with respect to some episodes of the earlier history of the international Trotskyist movement, a change that results precisely from the strengthening of the Fourth International. A learning process is going on as well, about which discussion is possible and necessary, and which we do not try to present as a definitive model or ideal.

We are in full agreement with you when you write: "some of the disagreements within the Trotskyist move-

ment involve questions of the utmost importance. But it is precisely within a Trotskyist movement capable of rising above sectarianism and ostracism and allowing a broad confrontation of ideas that these different analyses could truly be discussed."

One obvious conclusion flows from this: that the refusal to maintain a common organizational framework is precisely the root of the sectarianism and the organizational ostracism that has done us so much harm in the past and that even today causes splits that have no justification in principle, making programmatic agreement subordinate to differences over tactics or over conjunctural analysis. This is not to diminish the importance of the real political differences that currently exist among the groups that consider themselves Trotskyist, even if at times these differences are less pronounced in daily political activity than in factional polemics that have a sectarian ring.

In our opinion, the question that must be answered by any group adhering to Trotskyism is the following: is it or is it not possible for them, on a national or international level, to join with the majority -- if not virtually the entirety -- of Trotskyists, on the basis of democratic centralism, even when they know they will be a minority tendency for the time being or perhaps for an extended period, provided that they retain all rights to defend their own positions within the organization and on occasion even publicly, at times of pre-Congress discussion. Are they prepared to become involved immediately in common public actions as a practical test of this possibility?

To reply "no" to this question is to make fragmentation inevitable. To hope for political unanimity is obviously utopian. Moreover, the more the movement grows the more differences of tactics and analysis will multiply, at least periodically. The more it becomes implanted in the working class the more it will be subject to contradictory pressures, resulting from the uneven development of the class struggle on the international and even the national level.

To reply "yes" to this question is to declare oneself in favor of a process of national and international unification on the basis of democratic centralism, a process we initiated in 1963 which has by no means been completed, which we are trying to pursue, and which implies in any event that democratic centralism be applied in a different manner at the international level than at the national level. This is specified in our statutes, which prohibit Congresses or international leaderships from administra-

tively changing the composition of national leaderships or deciding on the tactics of national sections.

We are open to any initiative directed toward extending and completing this process of unification. We are prepared to meet with a delegation from your four organizations with a view to discussing such practical initiatives. Obviously we are opposed to any initiative aimed at provoking new splits under the guise of "discussions" or "regroupments."

In our opinion, a "broad political discussion" is not necessary before taking a position on this fundamental question. The Trotskyist cadres are fully acquainted with the existing differences within the movement.

A new discussion will not reveal anything we did not know before. We do not object to a discussion on principle, but for us that is not what is essential. The essential thing is to take a stand on the feasibility of a common organizational frame-work in spite of our well-known differences and to specify under what conditions this is possible for each group. We see this discussion as urgent and vital. In it we take the position Leon Trotsky relentlessly

defended between 1933 and 1940 against any formula for international "regroupment" with the London Bureau, which was based on the rule of unanimity, leading to complete paralysis and abstention as far as international action was concerned: and for strengthening the Fourth International as an organization as well as politically.

The idea of discussing a draft program among all those who consider themselves revolutionary Marxists seems quite pointless to us. At the same time, we would point out that building an international organization that is more than a federation of national groups, and an international organization that is built parallel to and jointly with the national organizations, is for us part of the program, a reflection of the objective character of the class struggle and of the social revolution in the imperialist epoch. Whoever does not accept this will fall sooner or later into "national-Trotskyist" practices, which sooner or later lead to "national-Trotskyist" deviations.

Awaiting your reply, we send you
our communist greetings,
The United Secretariat of the
Fourth International

Letter from Lutte Ouvrière to the United Secretariat

Dear comrades,

We received your letter dated 9 March and answering to the proposal we made to all organizations calling themselves Trotskyist to hold a preliminary International Conference last March in Paris. Let us recall that the aim of this conference was to examine the conditions to be met in order to set up an international organizational framework which would allow a confrontation of the political lines and programs of the various groups and currents, and which would enable them to establish mutual ties and to eventually carry out common actions.

It seems to us that your letter shows very clearly our disagreements on the question of the present state of the world Trotskyist movement and on the methods to be put forward so as to get out of this situation and to become able one day to create a true Fourth International.

Indeed, your only substantial proposal to those Trotskyist groups and currents which are not affiliated to your international organization is to join yourselves. As if this was enough to go beyond the present state of the Trotskyist movement. Or perhaps do you find today's state of things satisfying? In that case, so much the better for you. But in our opinion, an international leadership who shut their eyes when confronted with real problems is not a leadership at all.

Our proposal to the whole Trotskyist movement was to work toward the building of a permanent framework for discussion, confrontation, and elaboration. Your answer:

"In our opinion, the question to be answered by any group referring to Trotskyism is the following. Is it possible for you to cohabitate with the majority of Trotskyists (not to say almost all of them), at the national or international level, on the basis of democratic centralism, even when you feel that, momentarily or for some time, you will be a minority tendency, provided that you enjoy every right to defend your own positions inside the organization and, occasionally, during the discussions prior to a congress, publicly as well? Are you ready to engage right now in common public actions which are a practical test of this possibility?..."

Let us say right away that, for our part, we are ready to carry out common actions with the other Trotskyist groups at any time, and regardless of our disagreements with them on other points. The only preconditions that

we think ought to be met in that case being that these actions should be undertaken on a clear political basis, should be based on clear agreements, and should correspond to the organizational possibilities of each group.

But it is precisely the lack of international ties and of an organizational framework capable of elaborating such actions that makes them impossible today. Who can show us the common public actions that have been organized these last few years on the international level by Trotskyist groups belonging to different trends? Then how can a practical test of the possibility to cohabitate inside a single international organization even be tried?

By your answer, you are in fact turning your backs on the real problem because you continue to steadfastly hold on to the myth of a living Fourth International, supposedly represented by your own organization.

The truth is that, today, the Trotskyist movement is scattered, or even reduced to bits and pieces. And the United Secretariat is nothing but one international regrouping of Trotskyists among others, even if the biggest one. Many other Trotskyist groups--and large ones like UK's WRP, France's OCI and Lutte Ouvrière--either stay outside any regrouping or have their own international body. As for the groups who belong to the United Secretariat, their membership is more formal than real. The situation prevailing today inside your international organization--numerous splits within national organizations along the line of the disagreements within the United Secretariat itself, and a plethora of "sympathizing groups" resulting from these splits--contradicts your make-believe declarations about its centralist-democratic functioning.

It is a fact that the Trotskyist movement is scattered and in pieces. Nobody can deny it. The question today is how can we go beyond this dispersal and solve the problem? Of course, the question may be simply brushed aside. Some Trotskyist groups do just that. Generally speaking, they are content with refusing the Trotskyist label to any other group. The United Secretariat, if we understood you well, does not want to behave in such a sectarian and insane way.

However, when you write "Join the United Secretariat" which is the basic meaning of your letter--you are also evading the question. Because your position implies that the problem has already been solved.

Our goal and the goal of any Trotskyist is to build a genuine Fourth International, a world party of the revolution on the basis of democratic centralism. But this remains a goal to be reached. And mere proclamations will never suffice to accomplish this.

In order to have such a party, the various national sections making it up must have a common political basis. That is, they must have worked out a common political program and practice in the course of struggles. There must also exist an international leadership recognized as such by the various sections.

These two conditions are precisely what is lacking today. And this is what accounts for the dispersed state of the movement.

Moreover, because they are lacking, a regrouping of the Trotskyist movement today on a centralist democratic basis is impossible. At best, an international body functioning on the basis of democratic centralism will regroup only a minority of Trotskyist groups, i. e., those groups which have had the opportunity to work together, to know each other, and to realize the worth of a given leadership.

The United Secretariat is not even such a limited organization; because its functioning is not basically centralist and democratic. The bigger sections continue to cohabitate inside the United Secretariat simply because they have been able to preserve their autonomy almost totally -- some even went so far as to build their own international regrouping. Their disagreements come out into the open only when the national sections which they influence are split.

This is borne out clearly not only by the facts, but also by your letter.

You claim that your organization is ruled by democratic centralism. But you are the ones who wrote that:

" . . . democratic centralism is applied on the international scale in a different way than on the national scale. This is explained in our statutes which exclude the possibility for congresses or international leaderships to modify by administrative measures the composition of national leaderships or to determine the tactics of national sections."

Just what is an international leadership which cannot determine the tactics of national sections? To what extent does it deserve the name of leadership? Is it a leadership at all?

Here of course, we are not accusing the United Secretariat of being logical enough to admit its own limits and to recognize in reality that there is no international Trotskyist leadership. But what does the above-mentioned passage of your statutes mean if not that the various national sections making up the United Secretariat do not trust the leadership, have put this down on paper, and are asking the leadership in advance to say it is powerless? Does not that mean that you actually function in a way much different to what your theory claims?

Is it not a well-known fact that in many countries, there exist many groups claiming to be either sections or sympathizers of the United Secretariat and who carry out contradictory policies in their own country? Is it not true that the disagreements existing between the various tendencies of the United Secretariat are publicly expressed in each tendency's press even when no congress is in view? What then is left of democratic centralism as you yourself view it and define it?

Do not misinterpret us. We do not accuse you of letting your various tendencies carry out public discussions. On that account, in fact, we would rather reproach you for having tried so long to impose a fictitious unanimity on them. We do not reproach the United Secretariat either for maintaining organizational ties between groups who profoundly disagree or carry out different or even opposed policies. Our reproach here would rather be that too often in the past you resorted to splits or exclusions to solve political disagreements.

What we do say is that your behavior is in contradiction with your principles. We reproach you for not saying things clearly, for not facing reality, and for maintaining a fiction. And this fiction is a hindrance to the whole Trotskyist movement, be it only because it prevents the movement from drawing up its balance-sheet. And to avoid any misunderstandings, we would like to say here that we think that many positive results should figure on this balance-sheet. After all, the Trotskyist movement achieved something by maintaining itself at all costs during a forty-year retreat of the working-class movement.

What use is a fictitious Fourth International, based on a so-called democratic centralism? Today, this is beyond the reach of the international movement. At best, such a fiction serves to blind oneself. At worst, it serves to justify sectarianism, ostracism, and exclusions, thus to prevent not only political confrontations but also a certain political collaboration on the international scale.

We will ask you a question in our turn. Is the United Secretariat ready -- whatever organizational ties it may keep between the groups making it up -- to work toward a confrontation of the program and political lines of the various organizations calling themselves Trotskyist and, at the same time, toward the elaboration of common actions and the definition of the kind of mutual help these organizations could give to each other?

To answer "yes" to this question is to agree to the setting up of an international organizational framework which, though it does not claim to be the Fourth International, or to function on the basis of democratic centralism, would allow strong ties to be established between groups. This is the question we had in mind when we called for the March International Conference. A second conference is to be held in June.

However, the contents of your letter and the veto you opposed to the participation in this conference of

groups belonging to the United Secretariat seem to indicate that your answer to this question is "no." It appears that the United Secretariat looks forward to regular contacts and work only with its own member-groups. In which case, we conclude that you are satisfied with the present situation of the Trotskyist movement and that you refuse to seriously examine the question of how to go beyond and overcome it.

In any case, we are convinced that one day or another, the Trotskyist movement will have to seriously cope with the question we raise today. The sooner would be the better, of course. Also, it would be best if the most representative groups -- among which those making up the United Secretariat -- were to set about this task.

Pending your answer, we send you, dear comrades, our communist greetings.

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Letter from United Secretariat to Lutte Ouvrière

To the Comrades of LUTTE OUVRIERE - France
COMBAT OUVRIER - Antilles
THE SPARK - USA
UNION AFRICAINE DES
TRAVAILLEURS COMMUNISTES
INTERNATIONALISTES

Dear Comrades,

We have received your letter of May 15, 1976. We believe that it is useful to define more precisely the differences that separate us and the points that unite us on the key question for Trotskyists, building the Fourth International.

1. The differences are not where you locate them. You misjudge our beliefs and our motives, when you assume that we are satisfied with the strengths and weaknesses of our organization, that we shut our eyes to the multiplicity of organizations claiming adherence to Trotskyism, or that we are content to call on them to join our organization. Such behavior is as foreign to us as, to judge from your statements, it is to you.

We do not delude ourselves that the Fourth International, as it exists today, is the Fourth International that Trotsky wished to found after 1933: a mass revolutionary International capable of playing

the role of "general staff of the world revolution", not just on paper, but in fact. We see ourselves as one of the nucleuses that will constitute this future mass communist International, a nucleus that believes it is working most systematically to create such an International.

Like you, we believe the division among those adhering to Trotskyism is highly detrimental to building revolutionary parties and an International with influence in the working class. Like you, we believe it is necessary to work to overcome this state of affairs.

Furthermore, we will make no secret of the fact that even if all those who call themselves "Trotskyists" were unified, this would be absolutely insufficient to immediately create the mass revolutionary Fourth International needed for the victory of the revolution. Such an International would have to assemble much broader forces, which of course would have to be drawn together on the basis of the revolutionary-Marxist program. Today a large proportion of these are found outside organizations adhering to Trotskyism. Winning them to our program is just as important a task -- if not even more important in a number of countries -- as unifying the Trotskyists, and it is a harder one.

Thus our differences are not over the goal to be achieved nor over the present state of affairs. (However, we believe you seriously exaggerate the degree of dispersion of the Trotskyist movement: we shall return to that. But any dispersion, major or minor, seems regrettable to us. On this point, there is no disagreement.) The disagreements have to do with the most suitable, realistic ways to overcome these obstacles.

2. When you state that, in order to overcome the division and dispersion of the organizations adhering to Trotskyism, it is first of all necessary to create an "organizational framework" that would allow "the politics and programs of the different groups and currents to be tested against each other in discussion" and, at the same time, allow us "to develop common actions," as well as "to find ways to help each other politically," you are starting from the assumption that it is the absence of such a framework that is giving rise to sectarianism and exclusionism. We believe that the opposite is the case. It is sectarianism and exclusionism -- whose character must be defined more precisely -- that make creating such a framework unrealistic and impractical as long as they are not overcome.

Let us speak concretely: what "mutual assistance" are the SWP comrades going to receive from Healy's organization, which considers their principal leaders "accomplices of the GPU"? What "mutual assistance" is the OCRFI prepared to offer to the majority of sections of the Fourth International, not to speak of the International Revolutionary Marxist Tendency, which they consider "Pabloite liquidationists," "interference-runners for the Stalinist bureaucracy" if not for imperialism?

Can we seriously think that by gathering representatives of all these groupings around one table we will make these criminal, infantile types of exclusionism disappear?

On the other hand, do the organizations that believe that the existing differences stem not from betrayals of Trotskyism but from different analyses and different concepts, really need long discussions at the present time to get to know the political differences that separate them? Aren't these differences perfectly well known from their respective publications?

We believe that no step forward in building a revolutionary party or a revolutionary International can be taken without active intervention in the living class struggle throughout the world. Perhaps we are incorrigible pragmatists. But we admit that it seems to us much more urgent to discuss how we can achieve

a strong united Trotskyist organization in Portugal, how we can insure a revolutionary Marxist intervention that could really influence the revolutionary upsurge building up in Spain; how to qualitatively strengthen the revolutionary Marxist presence in Italy in the period ahead, how to assemble the forces needed to build a strong Trotskyist organization in Brazil and in India, how to assist the Argentine Trotskyists in breaking the working class away from its populist-Peronist leadership,

If you can show us the least indication how by gathering the Fourth International, the signers of your letter, the OCRFI, the WRP's International Committee, the LIRQI, the TMRI, the Posadaists, the Spartacists, etc. in a regular conference we could achieve these goals in the short or the medium run, we are prepared for our part to do everything necessary to see that such an "organizational framework" actually functions. We cannot believe you would be so unrealistic as to press an assumption as unfounded as this is, at least for the present and for the immediate future.

Consequently, the "organizational framework" you propose would give rise to purely Platonic discussions that would not lead to any common action on central issues of the class struggle in the world today. At worst, these would be discussions aimed (without a chance of success, let us note in passing) at impelling "regroupments" through new splits. At best, they would lead to some marginal common actions, for example, in defense of political prisoners, etc. That is nothing to be looked down upon, far from it. But it would not contribute a bit to overcoming the division or the dispersion of forces you correctly regret. "Common actions" of that type have for decades brought together the most diverse organizations, including social democrats and Stalinists, without resulting in any organizational unification.

We believe you do not grasp the nature of organizational sectarianism, or do so inadequately, and that you do not start from realizing that it is the cause, rather than the result, of revolutionaries being organizationally dispersed. Differences are inevitable within the revolutionary movement. Organizational sectarianism consists of systematically exaggerating the differences, equating the behavior of a faction with that of an organization (a party or a nucleus of a party), equating differences in tactics or conjunctural analyses with differences in program, equating passing errors in formulation (at worst, embryonic beginnings of a revision of Marxism) with bloody betrayal or crushing of strikes and revolutions.

We are materialists, not idealist psychologists. We know very well that the proliferation of irresponsible splits provoked by organizational sectarianism does not originate in the shortcomings of specific individuals or in a specific "mentality". In the final analysis, it results from the long isolation of our movement; its numerical weakness, the unfavorable social composition from which it long suffered; as all the organizations during this period; the lack of any check exercised in public life by the broad proletarian masses over the behavior of its leaders and factions, etc., etc. But understanding the material and social origin of these deviations makes them no less harmful.

In our opinion, creating a nonbinding "organizational framework for testing ideas against each other" that does not commit us to anything beyond providing an opportunity for sects to display their "points of honor", as Marx said, rather than abide by the general interests of the movement, is no help in overcoming these defects in the present situation. It can even promote them.

In addition, you ought to draw conclusions from your own experience with international work. Have you not been trying for years to gather together various scattered members of the "Trotskyist family" at Lutte Ouvriere's international conferences? Has this dispersion been ended or halted in the least as regards U.S., the Spartacists, or Accion Comunista? What basis do you have to expect more substantial results from bringing together groups whose behavior is even more sectarian and whose differences are even greater?

3. To make your proposal for a "nonbinding international conference" more appealing, you are led either unconsciously or on the basis of poor information to take a gloomy view and exaggerate the dispersion, regrettable as it actually is.

It is not true that this dispersion is becoming more and more pronounced or that the Fourth International constitutes only one of many "international Trotskyist groupings." A cautious estimate leads us to conclude that the majority of the militants around the world who call themselves "Trotskyists" today are members of the Fourth International, or are in political solidarity with it where reactionary legislation in their countries prevents their formal affiliation. In the face of this solid majority, the "groupings" you mention are either insignificant, or consist essentially of one or two important national Trotskyist organizations. The Fourth International, which includes organizations in sixty countries, is the only one that actually constitutes an organization on the international level. Denying this amounts as much to denying the evidence as to

trying to deny that large groups like your own, such as the OCI and the WRP, are still outside this major grouping.

Nor is it true that sympathizing organizations (that is, national splits) are multiplying within the Fourth International. In the sixty countries where we are present, our forces are divided for the time being in no more than ten. And we say "for the time being," because in a series of these countries, and not the least important of them, unification processes have already been discussed that will appreciably reduce the number of these exceptional cases at the time of our next World Congress.

All this can be readily verified, and we look forward to demonstrating it at our next World Congress.

Neither can we share your opinion that the 1963 modification of our statutes, which removes tactics and the makeup of the leading bodies of national sections from the jurisdiction of majority votes by the international leadership, amounts to acknowledging that in the present state of the Fourth International's forces, it is impossible to apply democratic centralism.

We are convinced that even in a revolutionary International endowed with leaders like Lenin and Trotsky, with a very broad mass base at its disposal, the leadership would take care not to use its authority to alter the national leading bodies, or to prescribe national tactics for leaderships that disapprove of them and thus would be ill-suited to carry them out effectively. We believe that the difference between democratic centralism on the national and international levels lies neither in a question of the international leadership's "authority" nor in a question of "concessions" to centrifugal forces, but a result of the different tasks of revolutionary national and international leaderships.

The axis of democratic centralism in a party is the need to take power. Until the day "national" bourgeois states have disappeared, this task is above all national, not international (despite all the growing instances of the internationalization of the class struggle, revolutions and counter-revolutions in this process). On the other hand, the task of the revolutionary International is above all, that of coordinating and unifying actions to see that the interests of the movement as a whole prevail over national peculiarities and shortsighted concerns. That sort of unifying task does not raise the same imperatives for centralization as does the proletariat's struggle for power. Such an international operation confronts both major objective and subjective obstacles,

which makes necessary more theoretical and political elaboration, more discussions, more confrontations of ideas, and more common experiences before this activity can be accepted and understood. Moreover, another task of the International is to establish new sections and give them political and material assistance.

But is that to say that in the absence of international democratic centralism imposing national tactics there is no democratic centralism at all? Are you correct in asserting that an international leadership that cannot impose tactics on national sections is no leadership at all?

Let us not dwell on the fact that posing the alternative of "either you impose national tactics or do nothing in this sphere" is a bit too lightminded. Why rule out the possibility that an international leadership could persuade national leaderships of the correctness of the tactics it advocates? In the great majority of cases, that is what happens in our organization.

But is it not obvious that an international leadership can and should make international tasks its priority, with majority decisions on these tasks being fully binding on national sections?

Why can't a world organization be said to be governed by democratic centralism if, after free and democratic discussions, it elects by majority vote, an international leadership that has the right and the power to determine the movement's international line, to direct publications according to that line, to organize international actions on the basis of that line, and to summon the forces and resources of the national sections in order to bring new sections into being in new countries? Isn't that how the Fourth International functions today? Didn't we organize a worldwide campaign in defense of the Vietnamese revolution on the basis of a common line and strategy? Didn't we operate that way to bring out the lessons of the defeat in Chile and to organize solidarity with the victims of the junta? Didn't we call on the resources of various sections to assist the handful of Portuguese Trotskyists (barely twenty in April 1974) to begin to intervene effectively on the political arena and to unite their forces? Didn't we achieve the fusion of the ETA (VI) with one of the sympathizing organizations of the Fourth International in Spain, thanks to the action of the International, and contribute to uniting the thousands of organized Trotskyists in that country? Hasn't concerted, planned action of the same variety recently given rise to new Trotskyist organizations in half a dozen Latin American countries, notably joining more than a thousand revolutionaries in Colombia together under the banner of the Fourth International?

Is this inadequate, considering the tasks confronting the revolution today throughout the world? Undeniably.

Could we have done better? Undoubtedly. But is that really just "window dressing?" Can this be equated with unpromising confrontations in sterile discussion over differences 20 or 30 years old? Can this be equated with the London Bureau where no decisions were made unless they were unanimous (and even then they were not carried out)? Why did Trotsky, even though he was working with an international organization that was much weaker and at least as divided as the present Fourth International, fight relentlessly during the last eight years of his life against the idea of an "organizational framework" of the London Bureau type and for an organization structured as the Fourth International is today?

We sincerely believe that we are combating the division and dispersion of revolutionaries much more effectively by reinforcing this latter process of common action on the central issues of the world revolution today, even if it means putting tactical or conjunctural differences in the background, in the hopes that democratic debate will clarify things in the light of our common experience, than by limiting ourselves to noncommittal debates and to purely peripheral common "actions." Our movement can already accomplish this and is doing so with a growing effectiveness. That is why it attracts and will continue to attract other forces who feel the need for such an organization. And we repeat: would it not be better for you to join in building such a common international organization instead of wasting your time waiting for unity of everyone in a non-binding organizational framework? For the stronger the real organization grows, the more its material attraction works against sectarians and ends up overcoming most forms of exclusionism. The more the binding organizational framework dissolves, the more the sectarians can give themselves free rein.

One of the fundamental rationalizations for organizational sectarianism is precisely an organization's numerical weakness. When the latter includes only several hundred members, it is tempting to go apply your own tactics of "party building" outside, in the hope of gaining 100 or 200 comrades that way, rather than wear yourself out trying to convince a few hundred "hardened sinners" within the united organization.

But such behavior is seen as more and more irrational and ineffectual when you are confronted with a revolutionary organization with tens of thousands of members like the Fourth International today, which in addition is founded on a jealous regard for freedom of discussion and the right to tendencies within its ranks. Is it not more effective to try to convince those tens of thousands of revolutionaries than to seek to regroup hundreds outside of it?

Moreover, let us add that your contention that the public debates presently unfolding in the Fourth International are contrary to democratic centralism seems to be totally erroneous to us, an inadmissible concession to Zinovievist and Stalinist conceptions of democratic centralism, rather than reflecting the concepts that govern the Communist International during the period of its first four Congresses. Anyone who is willing to consult the public press of the Communist International from that period will readily verify the fact that it experienced much more violent public debates, with much more sharply opposing points of view, than those arising today within the Fourth International.

4. You pose a question that we have no intention whatever of avoiding. Is the United Secretariat prepared to work to promote both a confrontation of views over program and politics of the different organizations claiming to be Trotskyist, and at the same time to develop common actions? The answer is yes.

We have never avoided discussions. We are always prepared for common actions if they are consistent with our program and with the interests of the international proletariat. But this "yes" is given in a twosided context. We continue to subordinate noncommittal "discussions" (which are often sterile and sectarian) to attempts to regroup revolutionaries in a common organization based on democratic centralism as we understand it, as Trotsky and the founders of the Fourth International understood it. We continue to subordinate "common actions" on issues that are secondary with respect to the central tasks of the international class struggle to international activity centered on accomplishing these tasks.

We say this the more sincerely because since May 1968 we have always believed in the possibility of unification with Lutte Ouvriere in a single French section of the Fourth International, based on democratic centralism. We have always regretted that the 1969 efforts in that direction were not successful, and along with the comrades of the LCR, we are convinced that those efforts should be resumed in order to give an even greater impetus to building the revolutionary Marxist party in France. And not in France alone.

But we remind you of what we stressed in our preceding letter: to us, the question of simultaneously, jointly building national organizations and an international organization is not simply a matter of a tactical assessment. It is a question of principle and of program. Unless they are built simultaneously, national-Trotskyist deviations are unavoidable. Trotskyism, revolutionary Marxism, can only bloom fully on the international level. We believe it is contrary to Trotskyist principles to point up dispersion, divisions, etc. as a way of refusing to build an international organization right now, when the same dispersion and divisions at the national level are not invoked as an excuse for refusing to build a national organization. As far as we are concerned, there can never be any discussion or a confrontation of views on program where we will not pound this same nail again and always. And we note that you have given no answer whatsoever to this question.

Fraternally,
The United Secretariat of the
Fourth International

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Report of the United Secretariat Bureau Concerning Relations with the International Revolutionary Marxist Tendency

The October 16-17, 1976, meeting of the United Secretariat agreed to publish in the internal bulletin a report to be prepared by the United Secretariat Bureau concerning the January 26, 1976, meeting between delegations of the United Secretariat and the International Revolutionary Marxist Tendency. The text of the report follows.

United Secretariat Bureau
November 16, 1976

At its December 22-23, 1975, meeting the United Secretariat was informed by the leadership of the French section that the International Revolutionary Marxist Tendency had requested a meeting with the United Secretariat. After discussion, the December United Secretariat meeting agreed to hold such a meeting with the IRMT.

At the January 24-25, 1976, meeting of the United Secretariat it was reported that the meeting with the IRMT had been scheduled for January 26. The United Secretariat designated Comrades Duret, Galois, Roman, and Walter as its representatives at the meeting. Comrade Julio was invited to participate in the United Secretariat delegation, but stated that he would be unable to do so.

The meeting took place on January 26, 1976, as scheduled. Immediately after the meeting with the IRMT,

the United Secretariat Bureau decided that a written report would be prepared, explaining the points that had been raised by the IRMT delegation. In February 1976 the members of the United Secretariat were informed that such a report would be prepared. Unfortunately, this report was not prepared.

In a letter to Ernest Mandel dated February 11, 1976, Michel Pablo summarized the points raised by the IRMT delegation at the meeting. It is the view of the comrades of the United Secretariat delegation that this letter accurately reports the proposals made by the IRMT delegation. The comrades on the United Secretariat delegation at the meeting discussed the points raised by the IRMT delegation but made no proposals of their own.

Since that time no proposals for follow-up have been made by the United Secretariat.

The comrades who have been present at meetings of the United Secretariat Bureau in the period since the January 26, 1976, meeting state that the Bureau has not taken any follow-up action on the matter during the meetings that they attended. This is, of course, accepted by the Bureau as a whole.

United Secretariat Bureau
November 15, 1976