

DISCUSSION BULLETIN

A-18

June, 1954

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116 University Place
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Colombo
April 15, 1954

Dear Comrade Cannon,

Your letter of February 23, 1954, reached me in the very midst of a Special Meeting of our Central Committee convened to consider the controversy in the 4th International. The CC took it into immediate consideration, and in the light of its contents, later decided on certain steps. I had to await the outcome of these steps before replying to you.

The steps we took were as follows:

1. We forwarded your letter to the IS.
2. We extracted from your letter the concrete proposals it contained and declared to the IS that they afforded at least a basis for discussion.
3. We formally proposed to the IS a postponement of the World Congress.

We regret to have to state that the IS has not found it possible to accept our proposal for the postponement of the World Congress. However, our CC has requested the IS to place its proposal for a postponement of the World Congress before the IFC, and has given notice that if the IFC finds itself unable to accept this proposal, this proposal will be moved at the World Congress.

Since the arrangements for the World Congress are going forward (unless the IEC accepts our proposal), and since it will be for that gathering itself to decide whether it will function as a World Congress, the CC further considered the question of securing the participation at this gathering of the representatives of those associated with the International Committee. The CC has adopted the following resolution in that regard:

"We propose to the IS and IFC, and if rejected to the World Congress, the following terms for the participation of the suspended organizations and the French majority in the World Congress:

"1. The removal of the suspensions on an undertaking being given by the suspended organizations to participate in the World Congress. This will mean the recognition of two sections in New Zealand, Great Britain, and so on.

"2. Admission of the French majority to the World Congress with full rights of participation (including vote), if they seek such participation.

"3. The appointment by the IFC of a Commission which includes representatives of the suspended organizations coming in under 1. above. This Commission will decide on the representation to be accorded to the organizations participating in the Congress, such representation being on the basis of the principles adopted in respect of representation at the Third World Congress."

I have to stress that our above proposals are not put forward by us as a basis for negotiation between the two sides. They are our specific proposals for setting going the process of reunification of the movement, and it is our intention to work for the acceptance of these proposals by all sections of our movement. We request you to place these proposals before the organizations associated with the International Committee and to let us know as soon as possible whether they agree to these proposals.

There is one point in your letter of February 23, 1954, to which the CC has instructed me specifically to advert. You say "Since there are no discernible differences on the most important questions between us and the LSSP, we expect to find agreement with you for cooperation as members of the same faction." The CC understands the above as an invitation to the LSSP to join the International Committee. I am instructed to say that there can be no such question for us and that we continue to take our stand on the resolution of December 20, 1953 which I communicated to you in my letter of January 26, 1954.

Yours fraternally,

Leslie Goonewardene

* * *

P.S. An Internal Bulletin containing, among other things, the Resolution of the CC of the LSSP on the IS Resolution "Rise and Decline of Stalinism," will be posted by Airmail within the week.

(Note: The letter of February 23, 1954 from Comrade Cannon to Comrade Goonewardene referred to above is published in full in SWP Discussion Bulletin A-16, March 1954. The LSSP resolution on the "Rise and Decline of Stalinism" referred to above is published in full in SWP Discussion Bulletin A-17, May 1954.)

Los Angeles, Calif.
May 12, 1954

Leslie Goonewardene
General Secretary, L.S.S.P.
Ceylon

Dear Comrade Goonewardene:

Your letter of April 15 and also the April Internal Bulletin of the LSSP, containing the political resolution of your Central Committee and copies of your correspondence with the Pabloite IS, have been considered by the organizations united under the International Committee. At the same time, they have studied my letter to you of February 23 and have expressed general agreement with its main points.

They are prepared, now as before, to keep the door open to any serious proposals which might arrest the present drift toward an irreparable international split. To that end they have agreed to suspend plans for a formal international congress of their own, pending the final result of your efforts and proposals.

We note that your proposal for a Congress postponement was rejected, and announcement is made of the decision to proceed with the previously scheduled Congress of the Pabloites. As stated in my letter of February 23, such a congress can only be a congress of a faction. Its result can only be to formalize the international split, and to put an end to the possibility of setting in motion a process which might lead to the formal reunification of the movement. The Trotskyist forces organized in the International Committee have no intention of attending or recognizing this so-called congress, organized and arranged without their participation.

* * *

Meantime, we have taken note of two new developments which require consideration.

First, the publication of the resolution of the LSSP criticizing the revisionist line of the draft resolution on the "Rise and Decline of Stalinism"; your April 13 letter refusing to sign the so-called "Appeal" of the Pabloite IEC to the members of the suspended and expelled organizations over the head of their official leadership; and your counter-proposals for the organization of the Congress.

Second, the March 26 statement of Collins and the April 10 declaration of the National Committee of the Socialist Union of New Zealand, both of which demand that the international split be formalized, and that all direct or indirect communication with the suspended and expelled sections be discontinued.

From these statements it is evident that the divisions which exist within the world movement as a whole, between the forces adhering to the International Committee and those formally adhering to the Pabloite IS and IEC, exist also within the ranks of the latter.

On the one hand, the political resolution of the LSSP criticizes the draft resolution on the "Rise and Decline of Stalinism" from the

standpoint of orthodox Trotskyism, and you also take a stand for unification with the suspended and expelled sections.

On the other hand, the groups of Collins and the Socialist Union are rapidly developing political positions which go far beyond the piece-meal revisionism of Pablo, toward a complete break with what the declaration of the Socialist Union calls "the sectarian past of the International," i.e., its program and the activity based upon it in the past, and reject even any talk of reunification with the orthodox Trotskyists.

Since these three mentioned organizations, dissenting from the Pablo policy for different reasons, undoubtedly constitute a numerical majority of the organized forces formally recognizing the Pabloite IS and IEC -- leaving aside the suspended and expelled organizations, which already constitute a large numerical majority of the organized world movement -- the attempt of Pablo, nevertheless, to speak in the name of the international movement, to decide when a congress shall be called and to lay down the conditions for participation in it, becomes somewhat ludicrous. This attempt of a minority of a minority to call a quick congress to decide things for everybody must be condemned as a criminal adventure.

It is to be presumed that the differences on organizational policy within the ranks of organizations recognizing the Pabloite IS, will have to be discussed in the ranks of the various organizations before they can take an intelligent position on them; and that this alone would require a postponement of the projected June Congress. Moreover, the political resolution of the LSSP, if it is not to be given the short shrift that was the fate of the French resolution prior to the Third World Congress, will have to be translated and published, together with the Pabloite reply. Time will have to be allowed for discussion, and this also would necessarily entail a postponement of the Congress.

Besides that, the organizations affiliated to the International Committee will want to publish your document in their Internal Bulletins, to discuss it and to inform you of their opinions. It seems to me that you yourselves will expect this consideration for your resolution before coming to a congress where a vote is to be taken on it.

The total situation in the international movement, still further complicated since my letter of February 23, must convince all responsible people in our movement that the discussion must be extended and amplified; and that a postponement of the Congress is an imperative necessity. I can tell you that the orthodox Trotskyist forces organized around the International Committee have all expressed themselves firmly on this point and will not depart from it.

* * *

This does not signify a rejection of the proposals of the LSSP for the organization of the World Congress. What is necessary first, however, is to prepare the conditions for a congress which would not result in a fight over representation and mandates, and a definitive split on such grounds, before the congress could ever become formally constituted.

Your proposal for a removal of the suspensions is certainly correct, since that is the sine qua non even for any talk about a joint congress. Your second point about the "admission of the French majority to the World Congress" etc., is also correct, and is likewise a pre-condition for an agreement on a joint congress with the participation of the other organizations affiliated with the International Committee.

Your third point, providing for a commission to decide on the "representation to be accorded to the organizations participating in the Congress," will also be accepted by the organizations associated with the International Committee. Some such commission will undoubtedly be necessary, and it goes without saying that the suspended organizations would have to be represented on the commission. The Pabloite's announcement of a "commission," excluding such representation, has naturally been rejected out of hand by all the suspended and expelled organizations.

If the political conditions for a serious attempt at reunification through a World Congress have been previously established, and if there is a serious will to effect a formal reunification, such questions as this will naturally be solved without much difficulty by negotiation and agreement. That has been the case in every unification I have ever had anything to do with, and such occasions have been numerous. On the other hand, all attempts to begin a reunification process on the organizational level, without a full clarification of the political questions involved, and without a real will on both sides to effect unification despite political differences, clearly established and recognized, have ended in failure.

If the de facto split is recognized, and if there is a will to initiate a movement toward a genuine reunification, then it is self-evident that, at a certain stage in the development, it will be necessary to establish some kind of a commission to sift out and verify conflicting membership claims and agree on representation, personnel of Congress reporters and committees, agenda, etc., etc. I think it is likewise self-evident that, in order for such a commission to function effectively, all concerned will have to be represented.

If and when the time comes for it, when there can be a reasonable confidence that such a commission could function with some realistic prospect of success, I do not think the unification will fail on the question of the commission. But just because I consider it stupid to quarrel and split over such questions, I emphasize my opinion that conditions are not yet present for a joint congress, and that consequently discussion of organizational arrangements is premature.

* * *

By that, I do not mean to say that discussion of the question of unity and of an eventual joint congress is useless. Far from it. But the whole project must be approached realistically, proceeding from the real situation, as it is.

I note that the "Appeal" of the Pabloite IEC, dated April 15, declares its wish to "re-establish the unity of the International." If that is really the case, contrary to their previous course of

expulsions, suspensions, removals, threats and excommunications, then the next thing in order is not a commission to arrange a joint congress. The first step, as already explained in my letter of February 23, is the unconditional cancellation of the expulsions and "suspensions," beginning with the French, and the announced discontinuation of such procedures.

After that, would logically come the setting up of a provisional commission, not to arrange a joint congress, but:

1. to supervise and work out practical details for the reintegration of the suspended and expelled sections;
2. to define transitional relations between majorities and minorities in those sections where the split is in effect; and
3. to organize and regulate the further course of the internal discussion; and to decide and agree on what aspects, if any, of the further discussion should be conducted in public.

You will note that this letter says nothing about good or bad will on the part of any of those who profess to favor the reunification of the movement. That will be demonstrated by action, not by words. If there is bad will on either side there will be no reunification in any case, and maneuvers around the question will come to nothing.

Even with good will for formal reunification, there is no certainty that it can be re-established. But, in my opinion, there is still a chance -- if your proposal for a postponement of the Congress is eventually accepted. This chance is a very fragile one under present conditions, and the question of where to begin is very important. It may decide the fate of the whole enterprise.

The suggestions about procedure made above are not offered as counter-proposals to yours, but rather as indications of how I think the objective you are seeking can be approached most effectively.

Fraternally,

James P. Cannon

(Reprinted from LSSP Internal Bulletin -- Ceylon -- dated March 1954)

LETTER OF MARCH 13, 1954 TO THE
SECRETARY OF THE IS FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE LSSP

Dear Comrade,

The attached letter of Comrade Cannon in reply to my letter of January 26, 1954, written under instructions from the Central Committee of the LSSP, was received on March 6.

You will remember that my letter appealed to Comrade Cannon to persuade those associated with the International Committee to come into the officially-planned Congress and to fight the battle there. You will note that in reply to this, Comrade Cannon sets out the following concrete proposals:

1. Unconditional cancellation of all the expulsions of genuine Trotskyist parties, beginning with the French, and the announced discontinuation of such procedures.

2. Equal rights and full representation (to these restored organizations) according to the strength and importance of their organizations.

3. No demand of special pledges regarding acceptance of World Congress decisions from those participating in the Congress.

4. That the World Congress be postponed.

It seems to us that these proposals provide a basis at least for discussion with a view to enabling a single World Congress to be held. We are strengthened in this view by the proposals contained in Comrade Germain's letter to Comrade Breitman of December 9, 1953.

While awaiting the reactions of the IS to the above proposals, I have to state that it is the considered view of the CC of the LSSP that the World Congress should be postponed. I have been instructed by the CC formally to make that proposal to the IS. So long as there is any possibility of securing a single world congress, the CC is of the unanimous opinion that a reasonable opportunity should be provided for exploring that possibility.

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(Note: The letter of January 26 to Comrade Cannon and his reply, referred to above, are published in full in SWP Discussion Bulletin A-16, March 1954, under the title, "First Principles in the Fight Against Pabloism." The Breitman-Germain correspondence, referred to above, will be found in SWP Discussion Bulletin A-14, February 1954, under the title, "Trotskyism vs. Pabloism.")

From Internal Bulletin of the LSSP (Ceylon section of 4th International) - April 1954.

IS REPLY OF MARCH 23

To the CC of the LSSP (Ceylon Section of the FI)

March 23, 1954

Dear Comrades,

We are in receipt of the letter of Comrade Tilak accompanied by the copy of a letter which Cannon sent you.

The IS at the meeting of March 14 -- that is, before receiving these two letters and the proposal they contained of a postponement of the World Congress -- had decided to address all members of the IEC and to ask them to launch an invitation to all the groups which have split from the International to participate in the 4th World Congress. We are sending to Comrade Tilak and Colvin, members of the IEC, the proposal of the IS.

On our part, we do not see any reason to go back now on this procedure nor above all to decide to postpone the World Congress. First of all, in our capacity as the IS, we are formally bound by the decisions of the 13th and 14th Plenums of the IEC. The letter of Cannon is quite explicit in the real aims that he seeks; to flatter again your organization in order to win it over to his faction, while all the time he goes on with "organization of the revolt" in the sections with his Committee of the Fourth International. If he wishes to postpone the Congress, it is not at all in order later to make possible "a single Congress," regarding which on his own admission he has hardly any faith, but solely in order in the meantime to further strengthen his faction, to change the relationship of forces in his favour and to sow confusion and indecision amidst our own ranks. All this is said in a very clear, and we might say even cynical, manner.

We do not believe that the International should help these maneuvers in any manner whatsoever.

The tone and content of Cannon's letter are for us a further proof of the unbelievable Machiavellism of the man and of his desperate effort to break up the International by spreading slander, confusion and suspicion and by exploiting all weaknesses in our movement. The way in which he exploits and presents the case of your minority -- which you well know -- as well as his revolting references to the "existence of a secret faction of Pablo" inside your organization, must make perfectly clear to you his technique in the unprincipled factional struggle to which he has lent himself.

Other more important reasons make impossible, in our opinion the postponement of the WC at the present moment. The majority of our sections have already made very advanced preparations to secure their representation at the WC, and cannot cancel them without material losses and upsetting of their plans of work. For example, the delegates of our Latin American sections have had to purchase their places on the steamers in advance, and some of them will shortly be on the way.

But in our opinion by far the most important reason is the following: The crisis in the International has posed a series of political and organizational problems vital for the future of our movement and only an assembly which is as representative as possible of the International can provide a solution to these problems. To permit the prolongation of the present situation, with such a crisis in the International, a weakened leadership, and in the context of an international situation that does not cease to be disquieting, that would be the greatest irresponsibility on our part. To Cannon, this is not of importance, considering that he is opposed to the structure as a world party of our movement. Cannon speaks of an IS of usurpers and of its irremovable secretaries. He of course does this slanderously and demagogically, knowing perfectly well the monstrosity of such a falsehood. But for our part we declare that it is impossible of us to assume our functions as members of the IS and IEC any longer, in the absence of the holding of the WC fixed for June.

It is necessary that all our sections fully shoulder this responsibility and decide supremely in an international assembly both on the future policy and leadership of the International. This is now their strictest duty. They must do this as soon as possible in the interests of our movement. Whether this assembly of June should be called the 4th World Congress, or an international conference in view of the concrete proposals of the Cannonites, and it be decided that another Conference or Congress should be held later, this is a matter which this June Assembly itself with full knowledge of the facts, can decide. But it is primary that such an international assembly representative of our movement meet in the first place.

For all these reasons we insist again on the appeal we have so often made to assist without fail in the meeting of June. You will submit your proposals there and assume your full responsibilities along with the other representatives of the sections.

With our fraternal greetings

The IS

* * *

LSSP REPEATS REQUEST

Colombo
April 12, 1954

The IS

Dear Comrades,

The CC of the LSSP at its meeting of April 7th considered your letter of March 24th and has instructed me to write to you as follows:

We regret that our proposal for the postponement of the World Congress is not acceptable to the IS.

Whatever may be the motives of Comrade Cannon, we think that the postponement of the World Congress will afford an opportunity to set

going processes which can lead to a re-unification of the movement.

While appreciating the difficulties of the IS in the present situation, we do not see that a postponement will make the situation impossible for members of the IS, especially as the circulars of the IS itself point out that the large majority of the sections have declared that they recognize the authority of the IS and IEC.

We recognize the difficulties and financial losses which will be entailed by a postponement; but we regard it to be a much more important consideration that no opportunity should be missed for seeking the re-unification of the movement.

We have therefore to request you to place our proposal for a postponement of the World Congress before the IEC. We have also to state that if the IEC finds itself unable to accept this proposal, we give notice that we shall move this proposal at the World Congress.

We would also request that our letter of March 13th, your reply of March 24th, and this letter be circulated to all sections as soon as possible.

Yours fraternally,

Leslie Goonewardene
Secretary

* * *

LSSP PROPOSALS FOR RE-UNIFICATION

Colombo
April 12, 1954

The Secretary, IS

Dear Comrade,

I have to inform you that the CC of the LSSP at its meeting of April 7th passed the following resolution unanimously:

"We propose to the IS and IEC, and if rejected, to the World Congress, the following terms for the participation of the suspended organizations and the French majority in the 4th World Congress:

1. The removal of the suspensions on an undertaking being given by the suspended organizations to participate in the World Congress. This will mean the recognition of two sections in New Zealand, Great Britain, and so on.

2. Admission of the French majority to the World Congress with full rights of participation (including vote), if they seek such participation.

3. The appointment by the IEC of a Commission which includes representatives of the suspended organizations coming in under (1) above. This commission will decide on the representation to be

accorded to the organizations participating in the Congress, such representation being on the basis of the principles adopted in respect of representation at the 3rd World Congress."

In accordance with the above, I have to request that the above proposals be placed before the IS and the IEC, and, if they are rejected, I have to state that we shall be moving them at the World Congress.

I have also to request that these proposals be circulated to all sections immediately.

Yours fraternally,

Leslie Goonewardene
Secretary

April 17, 1954

To the CC of the LSSP

Dear Comrades,

We have received your letters of April 12, 1954, your resolution of the same date, as well as the letter of April 13, 1954 from Comrades C. de S. and L.G. All these letters, together with our reply, will be published in an Internal Bulletin of the IS.

Your resolution on the "Rise and Decline of Stalinism" will be published in a special Internal Bulletin, together with our reply to that document.

An overwhelming majority of the IEC has already expressed its support of the appeal proposed by the IS and for the holding of the Fourth World Congress on the June 1954 date previously set. We don't think your new propositions will change the viewpoint of the IEC. All practical preparations have been made for the holding of the Congress and several delegates, extra-European as well as European, have already made their arrangements to attend the Congress on the date set.

Consequently we ask you to consider that it is no longer practical to postpone the Congress and that you undertake at once to arrange for your attendance in order to put forward your point of view.

As you will see from the final text of the appeal that we sent you, it is directed without exception -- leaders and members included -- to all who were members of the International at the time of the Third World Congress and consequently includes the Bleibtreu group.

As to the remarks by Comrades C. de S. and L.G. that one paragraph of the appeal can give the pretext to designate it as a factional document, we honestly do not understand exactly what they object to in that paragraph. Its purpose is to make clear on our part -- that is, on the part of those who accept the organizational framework of the International, who do not belong to the Cannonite splitters of the "Committee of the Fourth International," and who do not see any principled justification for the split -- independently of eventual differences of political opinion among ourselves on one or another political question, we are all ready to accept the discipline of the majority of the International normally expressed in its democratic Congresses and by its normally elected leading bodies.

We think that such is also your point of view.

Your organizational remarks on the holding of the Congress, as well as Cannon's propositions, and your taking of a political position in your resolution of April 12, 1954 are for us an additional reason to refer the decision on all these questions to the supreme representative body of our movement, the World Congress itself.

To further prolong this situation is to play the game of the Cannonite faction which actually no longer desire the reunification of the movement but desire to change the relation of forces to its

advantage, to consolidate its own ranks and to maintain and aggravate the indecision and uneasiness in the ranks of the International.

We are not at all disposed to help in this game.

Fraternally,

The IS

Comrades:

The IEC addresses this appeal to all those, without exception, who were members of the International at the time of the Third Congress and who by their own volition have placed themselves outside the organizational framework of the International, centralized world Party.

The Fourth World Congress of the International, called by unanimous vote of the 13th Plenum of the IEC -- including the votes of Burns, Peng, Jacques and with the approval of the SWP -- will soon be held. In the meantime, the "Open Letter" published in The Militant in November 1953, and the setting up of the "Committee of the Fourth International," have produced a state of split within our international movement.

It is not our intention in the appeal we are addressing to you today to express again our opinions on the actions and ideas of those who are responsible for this state of affairs. Without altering in the slightest our estimate of these actions and ideas, we were and we always are for the unity of the movement, independently of this or that political divergence, in the organizational framework of the International and its regime of democratic centralism as a centralized world party, defined as such by its founding statutes as well as the statutes unanimously adopted by the Second World Congress and sanctioned by its entire existence since then.

We stated at the time of the first split actions that all political tendencies which respected the organizational framework of the International could participate and have full expression in the pre-Congress discussion as well as at the Congress itself.

The 14th Plenum of the IEC in December 1953 adopted decisions along these lines. The sanctions taken at that Plenum against those IEC members and leaders of sections who signed the "Open Letter" which called for split, or tried to rally their sections to split, were measures of suspension up to the World Congress. No one has been expelled from the International by these measures, nor prevented from participating in the pre-Congress discussion or at the Congress itself. Those who attempt to give these measures -- which were completely normal for any organization against individuals who openly call for its split and dismemberment -- and other interpretation, do so for the express purpose of rendering the split definitive.

The IEC has always been invested with the confidence of the vast majority of the International, as an organism normally elected and representative of this majority. At the Fourth World Congress this same majority will at least be represented. To claim the contrary is to entirely ignore the reality of our movement, and to be determined at all costs -- even while talking about the International, its unity, etc. -- to sanction the split of a minority and, with this minority as a base, to attack the International from the outside in order to provoke new splits.

We believe this path can never lead to the rebuilding of the unity of our movement, nor can it raise the prestige of the movement before proletarian public opinion. It can only perpetuate the split.

We believe that this is not the profound desire animating you. We believe that in your overwhelming majority you are as anxious as we to reestablish the unity of the International on the basis of the one fundamental rule of a proletarian organization, the regime of democratic centralism applied on an international scale.

The World Congress, representative assembly of our international movement, is the sole organism which has the power to resolve, by its majority, the political disputes and the questions of the functioning and leadership of the International.

Submit any disputes you may have in any field, to this Congress.

You no longer have confidence in the present leadership of the International, or its organization of this Congress? Offer concrete proposals as to how you envisage your participation in this Congress; state the conditions of the future functioning and leadership of the International which, if adopted or largely satisfied by the Congress, would in your opinion make possible the reestablishment of the unity of the International. Submit these proposals to a commission of the IEC, which would function prior to the beginning of the Congress sessions, and composed of such comrades as, for example, Tilak (Ceylon), Colvin de Silva (Ceylon), Edward (Germany), Livio (Italy), Germain, Posadas (Argentine), Bos (Holland), Dumas (France), Serrano (Bolivia).

The purpose of this commission is to assure your participation -- genuine, not formal -- in the Congress, in order to achieve the reunification of our international movement, with the Congress having sovereign decision, by majority vote, on all the political and organizational questions submitted to it. We state that for our part we see no political reason why the different tendencies that have formed during this crisis cannot coexist in the International if they respect its discipline, and that in this spirit we submit in advance to every decision of the representative assemblies of the International and its leading organisms that will be elected at that time.

Only a much more prolonged experience within the International of whatever tendencies have manifested themselves in the present struggle, could prove that they are incompatible with the program and the principles of the International.

This commission will start functioning prior to the sessions of the Congress. It will await any proposals you may have, from May 15 to the end of May. Your leaderships have been informed of the date of opening of the Congress.

If the aim of your struggle is not to ratify at all costs the split with the vast majority of the Trotskyist movement who did not then and there accept your faction leadership and its political ideas, but who wish to discuss and decide within the organizational framework of the International as a centralized world party -- if that is not your aim, you must take steps for your organizations to make contact with this commission and discuss with it constructive proposals for the reunification of our international movement, the holding of the Congress, proportional representation for each tendency, both in the Congress and in the new leadership that it will elect, etc.

SEIZE THIS OCCASION TO PREVENT THE CONTINUANCE AND ENLARGEMENT OF A DISASTROUS SPLIT which can only damage the opportunities for Trotskyism that have never been so favorable. Do not let yourselves be swept away by elements who want to perpetuate the split and break up the International as a world party.

CONTACT THE COMMISSION, PRESENT YOUR CONCRETE PROPOSALS TO IT, PARTICIPATE GENUINELY IN THE WORLD CONGRESS!

The International Executive Committee

April 15, 1954

April 13, 1954

The IS

Dear Comrades,

We have received your letter enclosing a draft appeal to be signed by members of the IEC. We have also received the dissent by Comrade Collins. We regret that we are unable to set our signatures to the Appeal for the following reasons:

1. The Ceylon section has already adopted a set of proposals to be placed before the Movement as a basis for securing a single World Congress. We endorse these proposals ourselves. The proposals in the IS draft are different from the Ceylon section's proposals.

2. The draft appeal as it stands can be construed as a factional document. See, for example, the following passage:

"We state in advance that we see no political reason why the different tendencies which have appeared in this crisis cannot co-exist in the International, providing they respect its discipline, and we state that we will submit in such a spirit to all decisions of the representative assemblies of the International and its newly elected leading bodies."

It is completely out of place for the IEC to make any such declaration as we have underlined in the above passage.

Further, the Appeal appears to be made to the rank and file of the suspended sections over the heads of and against their leaders. We do not think that this is the correct approach for the immediate task in hand which we consider to be the reunification of the Movement through a single World Congress representing all tendencies in our Movement.

Yours fraternally,

Colvin R. de Silva (IEC member)
Leslie Goonewardene (alternate)

London
April 26, 1954

To the IS Secretary:

Dear comrade,

I have received your letter to all IFC members in which you motivate your proposed appeal to the splitters to come to the World Congress.

As you know, I am completely opposed to your method in this question. I do not think that our task is "the reconstruction of the unity of our movement." The splitters have done what they have done because they are sectarians -- a dying cult with absolutely no future. We should leave them to die while we concentrate on the really urgent task of educating a solid cadre of Bolsheviks capable of understanding and facing up to the present reality and our place in it.

Let us square up to the fact that there is a split. It was not perpetrated by us or encouraged by us, and there is no way of healing it unless we are prepared to capitulate to their disastrous political conceptions. To restore these splitters to the ranks could only bring confusion and internal disruption into the FI at a time when clarity above all things is absolutely necessary. Numbers at this stage are not decisive. The loss of some hundreds of what you call "backward people" in the States and fifty or so hopeless confusionists in Britain is not really a bad thing. In any case, far worse than this loss is to continue this undignified trading of curses across the Atlantic in the hope that in some miraculous way this will bring "unity." Let us abandon this unseemly diversion of our energies and instead prepare seriously a World Congress of Bolsheviks.

Comradely greetings,

M. Collins

DECLARATION OF NATIONAL COMMITTEE
(Socialist Union of New Zealand)

We have watched with increasing concern the unstable behavior of the IS from the time Cannon launched his drive to split the SWP and wreck the International. If we refrained heretofore from making our views known publicly it was because we did not want to add to the difficulties of the situation and in the hope that the IS would come to appreciate the realities of our movement as it had appreciated the realities of the world around us. We speak now because we have become convinced that the world Trotskyist movement is in danger.

The latest maneuver of the IS contained in the projected IEC unity proposal can lead to capitulation to the retrograde, sectarian elements, or to complete demoralization and disorientation. The maneuver must be categorically rejected and the IS must reorient its course fundamentally.

On the eve of the World Congress the IS proposes that the Cannonites be permitted to ignore the presently constituted leadership of the International and to set their own terms for participation in the forthcoming World Congress through negotiations with a committee whose personnel in effect will be selected by the Cannonites. Some will probably be bewildered to hear such a proposal from those who have been shouting about "the centralized world party," "the statutes," etc. But, in reality, this is the culmination of a false course started a year ago, and is, in the immediate sense a reply to the unofficial negotiations between Cannon and Tilak of the Ceylonese LSSP. Cannon, who is willing to discuss unity proposals with Tilak because he believes there is a political agreement between them against the "revisionists," lays down the following terms (SWP Bulletin, March 1954): to remove the present leadership of the International, to rescind its political line and orientation as "revisionist" and "pro-Stalinist," to set aside all organizational measures taken to protect the movement against the split (in reality to reinstate Bleibtreu and Burns to the position of leadership in their own countries), to postpone the Congress until such time as he can be assured of a majority to impose his own line and leadership. In a word, it is a demand for unconditional surrender, politically and organizationally.

Yet, despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of the world movement has rallied behind the International, the IS is apparently in the throes of wavering and indecision. It is now formally proposing to take a big step in yielding to Cannon's ultimatum. It rationalises its retreat by reference to a desire to influence the "backward elements" still following Cannon. As a strictly tactical matter, retreat and surrender are the poorest means to win over anybody. But the IS proposal is wrong and dangerous for even weightier reasons: it sets the retreat in motion. The next logical step must be the resignation of the present leadership, or that part which Cannon finds most noxious to himself, and the postponement of the Congress until all these moves have been executed and have taken their full effect. There is no turning back from this path of organizational compromise and surrender -- regardless of subjective desires to the contrary -- once conciliation and unity with the sectarians is considered the supreme need of the movement. It will then be but a short distance to the creation of ideological chaos, to the abandonment of the program the present leadership was elected to defend, to

full-scale political capitulation to the Stalinophobes and sectarians. Even in the event that Cannon once again brusquely rejects an offer he will consider a half-measure, and decides to wait until he can dictate even more extreme terms, the overall effect of the IS maneuver, so-called, is not to give us a greater hearing with the Cannonite ranks, but of growing uncertainty, disintegration and demoralization within the International movement.

The source of what can become a disintegration is at the top. While the sections rallied at the first sign of danger with admirable solidarity and understanding, the IS from the beginning has been engaged in desperate back-door maneuvers, in sowing fear and demoralization in the ranks. The Tilak-Cannon correspondence did not drop from the sky. It followed on the heels of similar proposals made by Germain to Breitman. The very next day after Cannon had perpetrated his split in America and England and had issued his appeal for a split in the International, Germain was offering terms for a horse-trading compromise -- at the expense of the groups loyal to the International in America, England and France. This disloyal and arbitrary action was taken without the approval even of the IEC, let alone of the sections most deeply involved in the matter. It became known for the first time to most of the world when the correspondence was published in a Cannonite bulletin. A protest by the English group to the IS against both the procedure and the proposals was blandly dismissed. In substance, the present statement is a continuation of the same procedure. Without opening a discussion on the problems created by the Cannon-Tilak correspondence (with which the IS was fully familiar) without even a reference to that correspondence in its covering letter, without calling a meeting of the IEC to consider the new situation if it thought one actually existed, the IS by a 3-1 vote presents the world movement with the reversal of the course decided upon by the December IEC meeting. Under the circumstances, the letter being sent to the IEC members takes the form not of a collective discussion of a new tactic in the struggle, but of a vote of confidence for contemplated deals with the Cannonites. This lamentable procedure and self-defeating course, this flouting of the elementary precepts of solidarity toward co-thinkers defending a common political line against an enemy political tendency, stems from a false position on the role of an International leadership in the present period.

Through the course of the present struggle, the International leadership has misconstrued its function in the world movement. Its present proposals exposing the movement to destruction as an effective Marxist tendency is only the culmination of a whole series of false steps which arise from this misconception, and which have now led it into a blind alley. The basic error consists in its attempt to rest on precepts of organizational authority rather than on being the rallying center for an ideological regroupment. It failed to understand that its prestige and authority derived essentially from the political reorientation it effected at the Third World Congress. Instead of recognizing the long hard struggle that lies ahead before the political line will find realization in life, the IS plunged into the farcical game of competing with Cannon in empty boasting.

The present conditions of our movement -- where the Trotskyists constitute small organizations seeking a foothold in the mass move-

ment, abysmally poor in finances, material resources and personnel, where International leaders often have to be chosen on the basis of practical availability -- these conditions dictate the form, character and authority of the International center and leadership. The International center and leadership has to be viewed primarily as an ideological center and authority. This simple fact the IS could not grasp from the first. Instead of assuming the political leadership in the fight against the sectarian tendency and battling it out throughout the International on the political front -- as even a Trotsky did in 1940 and in all previous major struggles -- they attempted to rest on formal organizational authority. This gained them nothing with the sectarians and their followers, but did provide grist to the Cannonite faction mill and lent credence to the charge that people were attempting to arrogate to themselves authority to which they were not entitled.

The line of resting on organizational authority could not be maintained in practice, as we have seen. As a result its actual policy has undergone the wildest fluctuations: from attempts to conciliate with the sectarians when it should have been involved in political struggle with them, to demands for their recognition of its absolute authority as a leadership, and now to a readiness for organizational capitulation when the movement is prepared for political struggle. This fatal course, which began by muffling political line for false organizational considerations of "world leadership" will end, unless halted in time, by undermining the political cohesion of the movement and its confidence in its programmatic orientation.

Therefore, it is with a sense of the strongest urgency that we call upon the IEC to reverse the course and to reorient the entire struggle along correct lines. The first requisite is that all present maneuvers with the Cannonites be dropped forthwith. The present task is the consolidation of the world cadre that was selected in struggle and defense of the Third World Congress around a program. Only when that is accomplished, when the program is fully developed, and the cadre is hardened and consolidated around it, can there be any fruitful consideration of approaches to the Cannonites. Organizational maneuvers, premature from point of time, and not serving a political program, will not result in political unification with our opponents, but in organizational injury and even divisions among ourselves. That is precisely where the present line of the IS can lead to, and that is why it must be reversed.

The Fourth World Congress has to become the rallying center for the political consolidation of the world cadres. This is its historic task. The Cannonites have split with the world movement, nationally and on a world scale. They have rejected the Congress in advance -- refusing to accept its political premises, its basis of representation, or its decisions should they prove to be in a minority. The Congress, in its preparations and actions, must accept this as a fact and proceed with the real work before it. It must turn its back on the sectarian past of the International and turn its eyes toward the living workers' movement.

April 10, 1954.

OUR CONCEPTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL AND THE STRUGGLE WITHIN IT

By M. Pablo

The position taken by the leading comrades of the Socialist Union, with regard to the appeal decided upon by the IEC inviting the leadership of the splitters to participate in the world congress, poses basically the question of our conception of the International and of the struggle going on within it. It was Cannon who was the first to express these opinions differing strongly from ours and it is on this terrain that he first of all prepared and launched the struggle against the International.

His speech to the New York SWP majority on May 18, 1953, his letter to Tom of June 4, 1953, his answer to Kane published in the Militant, as well as his entire last letter to the Ceylonese comrades, illustrates sufficiently his conceptions on this subject. His acts only confirm and emphasize this more. For Cannon the International does not exist as a centralized world organization whose functioning is regulated by statutes and rules, which has its congresses and its leading bodies and its discipline just as a national organization, as a section.

What exists are sections, several sections, among whom the SWP itself stands first and foremost and between these sections on the international plane there are ideological exchanges and cooperation. When differences break out and tendencies form within the International, Cannon has little concern with regulating them within the framework of the International and its democratic centralist functioning. His major preoccupation in such a case is to transform the tendencies into factions, that is, into groupings having their own discipline above the International and the national organizations, considering the whole struggle to be led from the point of view of the interests and the position of the SWP leadership.

He sees only "friends" or "enemies" within the International and he throws himself into the factional struggle with all the "Irish" ardor which is characteristic of him and with which he flatters himself. (See his picture in the Militant with sleeves rolled up for the "fight" in his "historic" attitude at the time of the struggle against Shachtman).

From then on the organizational framework of the International, its rules, its organisms, its discipline cease to exist. What counts is to achieve by all means, political and extra-political (above all the latter) a change in the relationship of forces to the advantage of the Cannon faction, since as a worthy son of the United States of 1954 which he probably considers himself, he believes that all struggles are for "power" and can be conducted only by force. This conception, which is in reality monstrous within the framework of a principled proletarian organization such as the International, Cannon can in all modesty consider as his specific contribution to the enrichment of the Leninist theory of the party. He hasn't hesitated on a number of occasions -- when his "Irish" spirit was at the highest point of excitation -- to confide in some (among others myself during the meeting with him in 1946-47) this modest conviction rooted deeply within himself that Trotsky, for example, was "soft" on the organizational plane, that he had never assimilated what Cannon believed to be Lenin's conception of the party, and that he, Cannon, knew more in this field than Trotsky.

Once he started the struggle for "power" and for a favorable relationship of forces, Cannon naturally sees himself obliged to dress up his factional conception of the International with high "ideological," "principled," "fundamental" motives. The manner in which he proceeded in his struggle against the minority in his organization and following that against the International, changing constantly the principal political motive of his attacks, is in this respect sufficiently clear.

Cannon is above all a clever and eloquent propagandist of the general ideas of communism and Trotskyism. He is less at ease when it comes to translating the generalities of Marxism and Trotskyism into every-day reality on the international arena.

When he was alive Trotsky furnished the correct analysis of the international situation, of the situation in the different countries, of the different aspects of the situation in the United States itself, and of tactics. Cannon tried to assimilate and defend Trotsky's ideas as best he could. On the rare occasions when he wanted to contradict Trotsky, such as on the question of the labor party in the United States and the question of the attitude to be followed in relation to the American Stalinists in 1940, did not make a particularly fortunate demonstration of his political perspicacity. Cannon probably knows himself better than anybody else knows him.

He compensates for his inferiority on other planes by the idea that he is a great specialist on the organization question, on the building of the party, on factional struggles, and also a guardian of "principles," of tradition, of "orthodoxy."

In reality the greatest "specialists" on organizational questions in the history of the workers' movement were those who were at the same time the most political, the most capable of grasping the dialectical and eminently political and flexible nature of the relations between the leadership and the ranks of the party, of the class, and of the class struggle at every stage: Marx, Lenin, Trotsky.

The others, the "specialists" of "Bolshevism," come in reality either from the school of Stalinism or from elements who are theoretically and politically less capable, but who are on the other hand endowed with a domineering, egocentric temperament. Without the control which can be imposed upon them by broad democratic organizations, they degenerate almost always into insupportable petty bureaucrats.

The present Cannon phenomenon, his conceptions, his acts, his attitude, is the product of a number of personal and objective factors. That Cannon has always had similar conceptions of the International and the struggles within it is beyond a doubt. But for an entire period he pushed them into the background. When Trotsky was alive, it was his powerful influence that stamped a high ideological level upon the struggles in which Cannon and his party participated; for example, the struggle against Shachtman.

In the years since the last war, Cannon's conviction that he was in a way shaping the International, which never looked for a quarrel with him, flattered his self-esteem and led him to adopt a responsible attitude that was particularly profitable for the general progress of the International.

His present attitude can only be explained by the consciousness he meanwhile acquired, especially since the Third World Congress, of the fact that the International was reaching maturity, that it was in every sense a reality and that this occurred at a time when the national situation in the United States weighed with enormous reactionary weight on the entire workers' movement of the country. Under such conditions all the weak sides of a person, all his moral and intellectual limitations began to gain the upper hand and make him the banner bearer of a tendency whose ideas and actions are indisputably alien and hostile to the nature of the International and its present revolutionary policy.

We cannot follow Cannon and the Cannonites on this road. Our conceptions on these very matters are profoundly, principledly, fundamentally different.

For us the International must be and is a well defined reality: a centralized world organization regulated by statutes and rules and with a discipline, exactly (or by and large) like the national organizations.

It is not a tendency and even less a faction of elements grouping themselves on the basis of a conjunctural political agreement. It embraces in one world organization all those who accept its general program, which is a resume of the general theses of revolutionary Marxism in our epoch, that is, the general theses concerning the appreciation of the present stage of capitalism, the USSR (and now also the other anti-capitalist states), of the two other principal currents of the workers' movement, Social Democracy and Stalinism, and the strategy and program of the world proletarian revolution in our epoch.

Since these theses on these questions are necessarily of a general character, and since reality and life are constantly enriched by new problems and phenomena, it is inevitable that tendencies should arise within this world organization having among themselves divergent views on one or another question. As for us, we are for the co-existence of all these tendencies within the International if they respect the rule of majority decisions and external discipline following such decisions.

We leave to more protracted experience proof as to what tendencies are in practice incompatible with membership in the International. Those who claim, upon appearance of any difference over tactics, or the estimate of a situation, or the present developments in the USSR and Stalinism, that one or another trait of a tendency already represents a political crystallization incompatible with membership in the International commit the frequent error of vulgar Marxism which simplifies situations and problems by simply telescoping several intermediate stages of nuances of an entire process.

I fear that the leadership of the Socialist Union now shares ideas close to those of Cannon and the Cannonites on the question of the International. How else explain their violent opposition to the appeal of the IEC and their thinly veiled allusions, so unpleasant and so revolting, that are included particularly in the resolution of the Union in respect to the IS, its members and its politics? How

explain otherwise such phrases as "the IS from the beginning has been engaged in desperate back-door maneuvers, in sowing fear and demoralization in the ranks," "horse-trading compromise" offered by Comrade Germain, is "disloyal and arbitrary action," "the fatal course of the IS by muffling political line for false organizational considerations of 'world leadership,'" "the sectarian past of the International," etc. Could one not most legitimately interpret all this as the expression of a contempt for the organizational framework of the International, equal to that of Cannon and the Cannonites, on the part of these comrades who wish to make the leadership of the International the leadership of a faction organized on the basis of a conjunctural political agreement at the time of a struggle in the International?

And how interpret the practical attitude of these comrades toward the IS* other than as a kind of punishment for the IS, because of its

*Which had its origin (although Cannon thought of it as "plots" and "intrigues" of the IS) a number of months ago at the time of the struggle in the SWP and has since been aggravated.

"soft," "conciliatory" and even "capitulatory" attitude, by limiting their collaboration and aid to a strict minimum, by sulking, by spreading all sorts of outrageous and unacceptable corridor gossip?

The tragic-comic note in this present crisis the International is going through is that from the outset, at the very moment when Cannon, enveloped by the atmosphere of spying and suspicion which presently prevails in the United States, saw without any proof "plots" and sinister "intrigues" being woven around his person and his faction by the diabolical Pablo and his "clique," -- at that very moment the comrades of the minority begin to suspect these same people of "capitulation" to Cannon, to accuse and deprecate them as leaders chosen "on the basis of practical availability!"

It is not superfluous to repeat that concerning me personally -- independently of my reservations at the outset of the struggle in the SWP about Cannon's accusations against the minority, and my revulsion against the extremely factional form which Cannon gave to the struggle; and independently even of the critical sympathy I felt for several political points of view of the minority -- I did not start this struggle in the SWP (it had its own causes) nor was I in any way for overthrowing the Cannon leadership in the SWP, nor was I for the denigration of his authority within the SWP ranks and the International.

I even went so far in this direction that I wrote to Comrade Livingstone, for example, the following:

"To change (the Cannon leadership) is neither possible nor desirable under the present conditions. To break up and discredit his leadership risks breaking up the entire organization which is under the heavy pressure of the present situation in the United States and its own isolation. It would moreover be an error to forget or to minimize the huge positive accomplishments of that leadership (and of Jim in particular) independently of one or another weakness."
(March 28, 1953)

When a truce was reached at the May 1953 Plenum I was among the first to consider it sincere and workable, to salute the "responsible" attitude manifested at that Plenum by Cannon, to propose in the IS (under the sarcastic smiles of Burns who was already aware of the cynical and revolting letter from Cannon to Tom) the text of a letter from the IS praising that attitude and insisting to the minority that they loyally respect the agreement. Even afterward, when I became aware of the letter to Tom, I hastened to telegraph Livingstone that the minority should not make public use of that revolting letter in the party, but should be patient and wait.

For all these acts and for all this conduct I found myself -- I personally and all the other comrades of the IS Bureau -- rewarded since May 1953 not only with the factional fury of Cannon but also with the growing discontent of the "hards" within the tendency in agreement with the International.

The resolution of the leadership of the Socialist Union, in several of its terms and phrases so encouraging and so flattering about our present work here, is the expression of the opinion that these comrades had of that attitude.

But we have not arrayed ourselves against the organizational conceptions and acts of Cannon in order to fall at the same time under the tutelage of another variety of organizational sectarianism.

That must be perfectly clear.

Never, with us in the leadership of the International, will there be a leadership that is in reality that of a faction and not of a world organization necessarily including several tendencies at a given moment that could co-exist on the basis of the rules of democratic centralism applied on an International scale.

This being well understood the comrades who think otherwise are naturally obliged to concern themselves with endowing the IS and IEC as the "rallying center for an ideological regroupment" of people more disposed to line up in a faction. It should not be so difficult to choose such "International leaders" strictly "on the basis of practical availability."

As for the idea that we suffer from some kind of a "world leadership" complex, these comrades should rest easy. Unanimously named to our posts up to now by the Congresses of the International, we have sought to defend, as was our duty, the rights and competence of our leading organisms without which the concept of the International as a centralized world organization would no longer exist. Whether or not we are members of these leading organisms of the International, we will in the future defend with the same firmness this functioning of the International.

On the other hand, the reproach that the comrades of the Socialist Union address to us of having passed from would-be organizational intransigence to organizational capitulation before the unreasonable demands that Cannon would perhaps formulate in case of his participation in the next World Congress, etc., is again manifestly based on an erroneous interpretation on the part of these comrades of the demo-

cratic centralist functioning of the International. Between congresses of the International it is the IEC and the IS who lead within the limits of power explicitly defined by the statutes of the International. But the supreme decision on truly important political and organizational matters belongs in our movement only to the World Congress.

Faced with the revolting splitting action of the Cannonites, we, as the IEC and IS, have taken every action in defense of the International permitted by the statutes of the International. But since the crisis broke out in the midst of the discussion preparatory to the Fourth World Congress, it is absolutely normal that the whole affair should be brought before the Congress itself. No one, neither the IS nor the IEC, has the right to definitively decide an affair of such magnitude. On the other hand, Cannon and his initiates claim -- demagogically and hypocritically, of course -- that they confront a "clique of usurpers" and other similar revolting stupidities.

Let them come to explain and justify all that before the Congress, that is to say, before the most representative and responsible assembly that can exist within an organized workers' movement. Should we fear that they will win a majority there? I affirm, at least in my name and in all responsibility, that if such is the decision of the majority of the International movement through normal consultation, I shall adopt the attitude of a loyal minority.

Would such an attitude signify organizational fetishism to the detriment of the political line, an "ideological capitulation"?

Such a conception could arise only among comrades for whom -- to repeat -- the organizational framework of the International does not exist and who do not admit beforehand any possibility of considering themselves a minority in the International movement, comrades who in reality reason on this question in the same manner as Cannon.

We are less inclined than ever to consider the political differences that have developed during this struggle -- independently of the manner in which they have arisen -- as secondary. They are very important and it is possible that, if they should continue and become crystallized, they would in reality make impossible co-existence within the same International organization. But a more prolonged experience is in any case necessary before arriving at such a conclusion.

To act otherwise and to declare forthwith that the differences are "principled," "fundamental," incompatible with membership within a single organization, is to proceed in the arbitrary manner of Cannon who, at the beginning of the struggle, without sufficient practical and theoretical proofs, extrapolated on the future developments, thus preparing and justifying a split.

From everything I know of Lenin and Trotsky, above all of the latter, his general attitude at the time of the formation of the Left Opposition and later of the International and at the time of the struggle against Shachtman, nothing would justify such a sectarian, bureaucratic and even infantile organizational conception.

That is Cannon's conception; it is not and cannot be ours.

As for the argument that we have neglected the ideological struggle, properly so-called, against Cannon and the Cannonites, it is at least odd on the part of comrades who, since they have "ruled" their own affairs in their country, have thereafter made no contribution at all to the ideological struggle that is still unfolding in the International. We have the impression, perhaps erroneously, that in this struggle it is still the IS which is making the greatest contribution within the limits, of course, of its capacities. The question of the International, of its nature, of its functioning, is one of the central political stakes in the current struggle. It has been posed from the beginning by the acts and the ideas of Cannon on this matter. It is also posed by the conceptions and attitude of comrades in the International.

The Congress will have to discuss and resolve this question. If it should appear that certain comrades and organizations admit only conditionally the principle of the International as a centralized world party, it seems to me that it would be more sincere on their part to request, for example, a statute for organizations sympathetic to the Fourth International which would permit them to act largely in their own manner, leaving it to others to maintain at the same time a firm international organization governed by its present rules and statutes.

To weaken the present structure and functioning of the International would in my view represent the annulment of the greatest progress made by our movement in recent years and would be the greatest defeat we could suffer on the eve of decisive class battles.

The building of an International is the most difficult task of the workers' movement, against which stand all the weak and backward aspects of the movement, nationally divided and under the pressure of prejudices and alien ideas hostile to its historic mission.

But on the other hand, the existence of an International is the best weapon of all to preserve the movement in each country from consequent deviation from the revolutionary Marxist line. For a movement like ours, still weak, subject to increasing social pressures from all sides, and facing the perspective of decisive struggles which reinforce still more these pressures, to loosen in any manner the common bonds that unite us in the International, to weaken these bonds, would prove to be literally fatal. We must resist such an eventuality with all our strength. I am personally certain that will continue to be the determination of the great majority of the International.

April 25, 1954

P.S. I don't want to linger over the frankly displeasing allusions of the resolution from the comrades of the Socialist Union on the subject of the IFC appeal, which is called "a reply to the unofficial negotiations between Cannon and Tilak," etc., and of the pressure that these negotiations have exercised on us. The dates of the letters published in this same Internal Bulletin show that the decision on the appeal made by the IS on March 14, 1954, after a great deal of prior consultation among our members, has no relation with the Cannon-Tilak negotiations.

As for the procedure adopted by the IS for the approval of the appeal, this was the only practical means at our disposal. All the European members of the IEC, with the exception of Comrade Collins, were long since agreeable to such a procedure. As for the extra-European members, there was no practical possibility for them to meet with the others in Europe.

Is it necessary to remind the comrades of the Socialist Union of the present conditions under which the IS works?

Is it also necessary to point out to them that, despite these conditions, the impossible has been achieved in maintaining its functioning and preparing the World Congress?

The allusion of the comrades to an arbitrary changing by the IS of the decisions of the 14th Plenum is no less unfounded. We have already stressed that in other documents: these decisions have excluded no one from the International and the definitive decisions are postponed until the World Congress itself from which no one has been excluded by that plenum.

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OUR ORIENTATION

(Draft Resolution Adopted by National Board, April 27, 1954)

The discussion in the SWP ended abruptly with our expulsion in November 1953 before a number of important political questions had been clarified. Lacking confidence in his own ideas, and in the outcome of the debate, Cannon's method was one of solving a political problem by organizational means.

We, on our part, had made a good start in explaining the meaning and the consequences of the new world reality as embodied in the whole complex of contributions of the Third World Congress. We provided a scientific analysis for the first time in many years of the political reality in the United States. We began setting down with precision the place of the SWP within that reality. We elaborated a realistic approach to the Stalinists. We ripped apart the make-believe world in which the Cannonites were dwelling; we challenged the fruitless round of "campaign activities" with which they kept themselves and their supporters stupefied, and we began to devise a tactical platform of work suitable to our position within the general political framework in the country.

But these two main contributions -- the interpretation of the international reality, and the analysis and practical platform of national activity -- still left a gap. It was still necessary to re-evaluate the whole broad perspective, both national and international, of our movement. This was not an arbitrary or artificial problem capriciously posed, or sucked out of some individual's thumb. It derived logically and necessarily both from the situation of our cadres in relation to the world reality and the progress of the discussion up to that point.

It was futile at first to become embroiled in a discussion with the Cannonites on our role in the world when there was no agreement on the analysis of what the world was like today or what it would become in the ensuing years. Obviously it would be one thing if a major deal between the Kremlin and imperialism was in the offing, another if we faced a showdown on the broad basis of the present alignment of forces. It would be one thing if we recognized the consequences of the sweeping changes of post-war development (Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, China, the developments in British Labor, etc.), another if we considered them temporary stages on the road back to the prewar situation. We had no common ground from which to begin the most important side of the discussion that had been projected but not developed by the Third World Congress.

It will help place the problem in its proper setting if we recapitulate a few of the high points of the previous discussion; a discussion, let it be noted, brought on by the crisis of world Trotskyism after the second world war.

The international discussion began, properly speaking, with our debate in the SWP in 1949 over Eastern Europe. Cannon understood at once, far more clearly than others, that the debate raised the question point blank of the role of the Fourth International. "If you say," Cannon declared, "that capitalism can be destroyed by an agency other than world Trotskyism, then what remains of our role? We would at best be reduced to democratic critics of the Stalinists." And since Cannon could see neither profit nor future in that kind of a

movement, he solved the problem by denying reality, shutting his eyes to what was actually going on, and contriving a make-believe world for himself and his supporters. In this world everything remained as Trotsky had left it at his death. In Eastern Europe they had capitalism. The Stalinists were betraying right and left precisely as they had done in Spain. We were the only revolutionary opposition. And when the workers got more radical, they would lift us on their shoulders. It was a pretty picture, and a formally logical one, too. The only thing wrong with it was that it did not correspond to the facts, either in the United States, or any other major country of the world.

As the ensuing discussion and the further objective developments blew this construction out of the water, Cannon and his supporters took refuge in an eclectic patchquilt kind of perspective. They admitted that capitalism had been shattered in Eastern Europe by the Stalinists from the top. They admitted that quasi-Stalinist parties successfully led revolutions in China and Yugoslavia. But in the rest of the world, and above all in the United States, everything remained as before, and we could continue along the old accustomed lines.

Sensing that their whole perspective was in danger of being blown to bits; they instinctively felt the necessity of building around themselves a "Chinese Wall" to insulate themselves against the disturbing thoughts and embarrassing developments seeping in from the outside world. This explains the rise of the Messianic ideology in the SWP, the theory that the leadership has been ordained to lead the revolution if it only sticks together come what may, if it never questions the faith, if it never turns right or left to gaze at other Gods, lest this lead to destruction. Because, surely it cannot be, they reasoned, that all this sacrifice and virtue will go unrewarded by History. The Cannonites thus "solved" the question of the perspective of world Trotskyism by semi-religious invocation and dedication, and the mysticism and cult of an ordained leadership. That is one answer to the problem, for whatever it is worth.

How have we on our part solved this burning question? It is unnecessary here to repeat the world analysis that has been written down in many documents. Let us simply sum up some of the conclusions of the present reality: We see a world where our perspective of Stalinism being destroyed in the course of World War II has been proven wrong. We see a world where Stalinism is dominant over the eastern half of Europe, where the Communist parties are the leadership of the colonial revolution in Asia, where they constitute the strongest organizations of the working class in Italy and France. In the rest of the Western world, Social Democracy has been resuscitated, and in the United States, where labor has not yet advanced to an independent political existence, the reformist labor bureaucracy remains dominant. One of the recent International documents states that the Fourth International enters the next stage of upsurge in a far superior position to that of 1939, but that is just rhetoric. The truth of the matter is that the Trotskyist organizations are not stronger today at all than at the Founding Conference in 1938, even if we disregard the matter of the present split. The Trotskyist movements in their twenty-five years of existence have been unable to grow into mass organizations for a variety of reasons which have been exhaustively

analyzed and explained, The two lone exceptions to this, by their specialized character, even further underline this fact.

The Cannonites still retain the outlived perspective, however, that the small nuclei will tomorrow become the mass revolutionary parties challenging all contenders and destroying them in battle. But a more realistic perspective based on the actual world trends is sketched out in the recent International resolution on "Our Integration in the Real Mass Movement." (We reprint elsewhere certain concrete amendments and criticisms of the document. Here we confine ourselves to the main purpose of this document.)

Basing itself on our previous analysis of the world situation, the resolution finds that we are living in a profoundly revolutionary period where the relationship of forces is developing favorably for the revolution, and that consequently the existing mass Communist and Social Democratic parties are subjected to unprecedented pressure. This situation, as experience has demonstrated in England, France and Italy, does not lead to splits and new formations, but remains locked within the confines of the organizations, undoubtedly because the masses feel the hot breath of the approaching world conflict, and do not believe anything can be achieved by trying to build new organizations at this juncture of history. Hence, our resolve to orient towards and to integrate ourselves within these existing mass movements for a long period of time, to act as the Marxist catalyst, to comprise the conscious left wing within the mass movement. For only with such an approach can Marxists play a role in the historic unfolding of the struggle, for only in such integration is there a genuine perspective for our small revolutionary cadre. Outside of such integration one can only declaim and posture in a vacuum for a brief space of time until events finally disperse the cadre.

This leads us to the next question: How do we envisage the development of the next revolutionary struggle, and who will lead them? Naturally, the question can only be answered in very general terms. But even a general answer is required because it determines in large measure our course. If we take our analysis seriously, we must have the conviction that the mass struggles of the coming decade will rise to supreme revolutionary heights, and that in the course of those fierce clashes, there is bound to develop a higher political consciousness, and a consequent regroupment of forces within the working classes. All experiences attest that in such periods the left wing grows at the expense of the right, and that at certain climactic points, the mass forces will be available for the creation of new revolutionary parties, either by a process of splits and fusions, or by the Marxist wings conquering the old organizations. If at such times the Marxist cadre is well organized and clearly understands the historical tasks at hand, if it has established itself over a period of time as an integral part of the existing movements having intimate relations with different layers of militants, if it has gained their respect in a series of struggles, the cadre can rise to the necessities of the historic moment, and with masses behind it, shape the course of events.

We are well aware that this is an algebraic projection, and that it cuts through such gargantuan problems as the third world war, the possible occupation of the heart of Europe by the Red Army and its allied troops, the possible bureaucratic-military transformation of several West European countries on the East European pattern, revolts against Stalinism on the order of the June 17 rising of East Germany,

attacks of imperialism to impose a counter-revolutionary order, all taking place in the midst of unprecedented devastation and ruin of war. But, nevertheless, the formula is an entirely valid one, especially in Europe, and at a later stage in the United States, because the aspiration of the masses, and the attainment of the next historic advance toward Socialism cannot be realized by the old parties and leaderships, even if one or two Communist parties in the West take a revolutionary path under the impact of mass pressure. The next historic advance will profoundly revolutionize not only all existing institutions, but the organizations and masses carrying through these transformations. Differentiations of considerable scope will alter the relationship of forces in favor of the Marxists. The experiences of China and Yugoslavia only presage more far-reaching developments to come. But the course of history is already revealing that if capitalism was first destroyed at its weakest points, in Russia, then in China, and is crumbling in the colonial world, it will have to be from the West that the revolution will rise to a superior level of consciousness, mass participation, democratic control and operation. The weakness and the backwardness of capitalism in the East pushed the revolutionary forces there to the fore for several decades. It will be the higher culture, tradition and the greater specific gravity of the working classes in the Western countries which will provide the conditions for the rise of higher type Marxist mass parties, and will lift the revolution to a higher level.

We are obviously discussing a very tortuous, complicated, and involved process which will take place very unevenly over a period of time, and with great variations from one country to the next. In what sense then can we speak of the future of the Fourth International, since the resolution declares, "Naturally, the world victory of the revolution will not be the exclusive work of the present national nuclei of the Fourth International but of their close fusion with broader revolutionary forces. From this fusion there will arise new revolutionary mass parties of tomorrow, as well as a new form of the world party of the International." The answer that the resolution supplies to the above question is as follows: "To the degree that the world revolutionary upsurge continues to spread and moves toward the world victory of the proletarian revolution and of Socialism, the program and organization of the International will be validated. The world victory of the proletarian revolution and of Socialism cannot be conceived as the arithmetical sum of partial victories obtained through centrist programs and formations. It will be the victory of full revolutionary Marxism."

The longer one ponders over the meaning of this quotation, the more convinced he becomes that this is more irrelevancy than answer, as the question that needs illumination first of all, and above all, is the next historic period rather than the period of the world victory of the revolution and of Socialism. And the discussion has reached the point -- and even more decisive the position of our cadres is at the point -- where more has to be said about the next historic period and our role in it.

From the rise of Hitler to the World War, there did not exist a strong enough current upon which a new revolutionary formation, competing and supplanting the old workers organizations, could be based. The Trotskyist groups found neither the open field that favored the rise of the Second International nor a development equivalent to the

October Revolution which started the mass trend toward communism. After World War II, contrary to our prewar prognoses, Stalinism was not eliminated, but rose to new heights of influence. Because the situation was, and remains, revolutionary in the world -- and because, therefore, the workers no longer clung to the old parties merely for protection against reaction -- there has been a clear test of the ability of Trotskyism to create an independent movement on a program broadly confirmed by the new revolutionary developments. The fact that no one can realistically envisage a breakup in the old workers movements prior to the next revolutionary developments is the clear sign that the old Trotskyist perspective has become outmoded. As before the war, the vanguard seeks to realize its revolutionary aspirations within the old parties, leaving no room for a new revolutionary mass organization. Thus, the Trotskyist movement, despite the brilliance of its leader, the considerable abilities and energies of its national cadres, and the many experiments with entries and fusions, was doomed to remain isolated. The test was made for a whole historic era, both in periods of reaction and revolution, and is therefore a decisive one.

But while Trotskyism, due to historic circumstances, remained outside the main currents of the labor movement, it built up in a quarter-century of its existence a truly formidable literature, doctrine and tradition. This tradition, we have said, gives Trotskyism the status of Twentieth Century Marxism. However true this claim may be from an abstract theoretical point of view, it has not entered the consciousness of broad masses as did similar claims made by the social democracy prior to World War I, or by Lenin and the Comintern afterward. The tradition of Stalinism led to the mass revival of the Communist Party in France after the war, and the tradition of social democracy to its revival in Germany, but the tradition of Trotskyism could do no more than maintain it as an ideological tendency.

Every important movement has its own specific tradition, and every important leader places his indelible stamp upon an organization, not only through the formal resolutions and theses, but by his methods of work, his approach to big questions, his hundred and one evaluations, and in ways even more elusive and difficult to describe. Marx projected himself upon the First International. Lenin put his stamp on Bolshevism. And without any per adventure of a doubt, Trotsky did the same in fulsome measure in the case of the Fourth International. Now it is a fact that our whole tradition -- so magnificent in many ways -- is of no interest to the existing labor movements. Because the tradition has been created largely outside of the labor movements, it is foreign to them. They do not see or believe that any of it is pertinent to the solution of their problems. We therefore have to face up to this aspect of the reality just as we did to other parts of it, and have to draw the necessary lessons.

The very formulations of the International Resolution must lead us to the conclusion that the revolutionary parties of tomorrow will not be Trotskyist, in the sense of necessarily accepting the tradition of our movement, our estimation of Trotsky's place in the revolutionary hierarchy, or all of Trotsky's specific evaluations and slogans. We in the United States had precisely this experience where the Trotskyists fused with the small Muste organization to form the Workers Party in 1935. The fusion occurred only after we had overcome considerable resistance in the Muste ranks to accepting the special

characteristics of Trotskyism by assuring them that we had no special sectarian axes to grind. How much more operative will this be when the left wing develops through its own specific experiences and the merging of different currents and groups inside the big centrist or reformist mass movements.

Our analysis and our tactical orientation would remain like a knife without a blade if we do not follow through with the necessary conclusion. And this conclusion is that in the present historical conditions, our cadres have to take the whole body of Marxist theory and struggle, including Trotsky's contributions to it, and translate them into the language of our lifetime, and into the language of the existing movements of the various countries in which we are situated.

The worst error is to think this mainly a job of clearer language, or for our cadres to start masquerading as simple homespun mechanics who have none too secure a mastery of grammar or syntax. What is involved if we are to integrate ourselves in the mass movement and to begin functioning effectively as its Marxist wing, is that we have to rid ourselves of all faction spirit and too-narrow understanding of the Marxist's role in the centrist and reformist milieus of our time.

Our purpose is to bring our ideas into the mass movement, and to gradually raise the consciousness of the ranks to the historic tasks. But the last thing in the world we should attempt is to inculcate the ranks with the necessity of adopting our specific tradition, and impressing upon them the truth of all the evaluations and proposals broached by Trotsky from 1923 on. The thought that in the coming period of our activity we have to go out of our way to mention the name and work of Leon Trotsky, and the name and the existence of the Fourth International, shows how far all of us have become infused with narrow group thinking, and organizational fetishism, how far we have traveled from the outlook of Frederick Engels, who warned the Socialists in America not to publish the Communist Manifesto, as it was based on old-world experiences, and that the American labor movement, developing under different conditions, would not understand it, and would not know what Marx and Engels were talking about. Why isn't it possible for us to take this simple thought of Engels and apply it to ourselves and our work? If Engels didn't think this was putting a question mark over his revolutionary integrity, why should we?

We said before that only by integrating ourselves within the existing movements could our cadres survive and fulfill their mission. We will now add to that proposition this corollary: Only by dropping all sectarian notions of imposing our specific tradition upon the mass movements which developed in different circumstances and under different influences, can our approach register successes and guarantee the future of our precious cadres. What is involved, it is clear, is not any modification of programmatic essence, but a sharp reversal of organizational concepts and perspectives on the nature of the development of the mass revolutionary parties of tomorrow.

There remains to say a word whether this course does not contain dangers that the cadre will get lost in the mass movement and therefore become liquidated as a specific revolutionary current. Of course, the danger exists, just as there is danger every time a revolutionist takes a job as an official in a union, and begins to live in an oppor-

tunist environment. Some succumb to material blandishments. But if the cadre is cohesive, and firm in its revolutionary convictions and aims, the losses are few and the gains are many. Events will justify the necessity for a Marxist policy and prove its effectiveness in action. The dangers will be counteracted by the struggle itself. We have an additional guarantee, insofar as there are any guarantees in these things, in the clarity of our views, the devotion of our ranks who have been tested over a long period of time, in our ideological solidarity, and in the unifying element of an international center. If we try to impose additional guarantees by adopting narrow group viewpoints, and sporting narrow group ideologies in the mass movement, we will vitiate the whole concept, and defeat our common purposes.

Although in the United States the situation is unique as the working class is still not organized into its own political party, the orientation here discussed operates with full force. One has to dwell in the never-never land of a Cannon to seriously promulgate the theory that the American working class, which has not yet attained labor party consciousness, will pass, with the next struggle, to the banner of Cannonite revolutionism, or what amounts to approximately the same thing, will in rapid-fire fashion, plunge in and out of a labor party to join up with Cannon and his lieutenants to storm the barricades. We have correctly stated before that the American workers will move massively through their organizations, and not jump over the heads of their organizations. That implies that they will move in deliberate stages, not when the forward columns are ready, but only when sizeable phalanxes of the class are prepared to move.

Basing ourselves on this analysis, we have oriented towards the organized labor movement, especially the mass production unions of the CIO, as the battleground of the big future class developments, and the repository of the forces that will advance the working class to its next political stage with the formation of a labor party. That does not mean that we are absolutely certain that a labor party will be formed. What the perspective does base itself on with certainty is that the inevitable political regroupment will pass through existing channels of the organized labor movement and have a political character capable of uniting masses at a minimum level. The broad character of this movement will provide room for the various existing political tendencies, Stalinists, social democrats, centrists and Marxists to operate within it. That is why, whatever the vicissitudes of the struggle may bring, whatever forms it may assume, whatever channels it may take, the strategy of basing ourselves on the organized labor movement, and particularly its mass production sectors, and directing our main attention to it, is the correct one and will provide us with the necessary sustenance to carry on, and in due course, to establish ourselves in conjunction with allies as the left wing of a growing political movement.

Of course, as we tried to explain to the SWP, between the present and the next developments exists a more or less protracted period of time, and a political tendency cannot deduce its day-to-day tactics solely, directly and immediately from the grandiose strategy, but must seek out and find every possibility for advancement of its program and its influence, be it on the most limited basis, and from sources that by themselves will not necessarily be the main forces of the big

labor advance. That is why in many localities, where trade union avenues are not open to us for one reason or another, we must seek out other milieus, whether of the Stalinist variety, or student circles, or various liberal or minority groups.

We approach all these strata, however, in the spirit of Marx's Communist Manifesto which proclaimed that the revolutionists had no interests separate and apart from the working class, that we are not a special sect, cult, or church, which seeks to draw people out of the broad currents into its backwater, but rather as American Marxists, we seek to join with others in advancing the existing struggles to a higher stage and on a broader front. We are convinced that out of these struggles and experiences, even before big mass forces take to the field, Left currents will arise with which we shall be able to cooperate and fuse; that the American Marxist tendency, as a stronger formation than at present, will thus be able to discharge its role as a left wing in the big movement -- as part and parcel of the struggle to create the mass revolutionary party in the United States. That is our perspective.

Our Amendments to Resolution
"On Integration in the Real Mass Movement"

The following is a section of a letter sent with the approval of our National Committee incorporating our proposals on the resolution, "Our Integration in the Real Mass Movement." The letter is dated September 29, 1953.

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1. The line of the draft theses on Stalinism is agreed upon. (Several amendments will probably be submitted in the course of the discussion and the document by all means should be cut, as the most powerful points get lost in the mass of words.)

2. Defense of the structure and practices of the International movement is agreed upon. We want to defend the idea of an International with a common program and the ability to carry out the decisions of the world organization. We want to characterize the attack as an attempt to blow up the International, give by indirection and subterfuge defacto leadership to the American Majority which will attempt to convert the other parties into satellites. The trend of argumentation in the September 3rd letter of simply standing on the statutes cannot be maintained however in the face of Cannon's unscrupulous attack. It will provide grist to his mill that impractical people lacking experience are trying to impose a rigid, over-centralized structure on a weak movement, and that a few individuals are trying to arrogate to themselves an authority to which they are not entitled. The line of argument has to be motivated primarily by Cannon's political aims vs. the International program, and the defense has to be more flexibly incorporated within this framework.

3. The document on our integration in the mass movement is not acceptable in its present form. It must, in our opinion, be amended.

Our main criticisms are as follows:

a. The American Question. The resolution states that "The International cannot and does not pretend to indicate in its documents and resolutions all tactical forms to be followed in every country," but it immediately afterwards proceeds to violate its own promise by pronouncing itself upon the most difficult tactical problems in the United States, and that in a few short paragraphs, which are extremely hazy, general and sometimes contradictory. The discussion of detailed tactical problems for the United States has no place in the document. The general broad perspectives of our work and the Labor Party tactic is all that is required and correct in this type of world resolution. If anyone has sufficiently studied the subject, he should write a signed article as a contribution to our discussion. If the International feels it wants to make a pronouncement on the question, they have to adopt a special American resolution which will develop their viewpoint in sustained, rounded and unambiguous manner. To proceed however by throwing in a couple of paragraphs, this way and that, in the midst of our faction struggle, is dead wrong -- and, in any case, unacceptable to us. (We will, of course, develop our viewpoint at greater length in the coming discussion.)

We therefore propose along the lines of this criticism that on page 9, of our mimeographed copies, the third paragraph starting with "In the United States," end with "is still being forged the political

destiny of the great American masses;" that the rest of the paragraph and the next paragraph be deleted; that on page 10 the whole paragraph on the American Theses be deleted.

b. The Building of Mass Parties. On page 14 we read: "To the degree that the world revolutionary upsurge continues to spread and moves toward the world victory of the proletarian revolution and of socialism, the program and organization of the International will be validated." The resolution thereupon proceeds to demonstrate that the program will be validated. How our organization will be validated is not at all developed with sufficient force and clarity. The short paragraph on page 15, "Naturally the world victory of the world revolution will not be the exclusive work of the present national nuclei of the Fourth International but of their close fusion with broader revolutionary forces. From this fusion there will arise new revolutionary mass parties of tomorrow, as well as a new form of the world party, of the International." -- this should be the main line of the concluding section of the resolution. The thesis must be thoroughly argued out as this is the real, the only way that our organization will be validated. If it is correct that this should be the main line of this section, it should not be blurred by a lot of asides or irrelevancies, correct though these may be in and of themselves.

c. The war timetable. Page 4 of the document mentions an "early war." Page 5, "the next few years." How many is a few years? Two or ten? And if you can't tell for sure, should it be included in the official International document? Individuals are entitled to have their private opinions on this sort of question and to write about them. It is incorrect to try to establish a private timetable as the "official line." There is no necessity for it in the resolution.

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