

**Healy**

**"RECONSTRUCTS"**

**the**

**Fourth**

**International**

**DOCUMENTS AND COMMENTS  
BY PARTICIPANTS IN A FIASCO**

*with a preface by Joseph Hansen*

**35¢**

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SECTARIANISM AND TINPOT DESPOTISM --  
AN EXAMPLE FOR THE TEXTBOOKS

By Joseph Hansen

"In their own circles they [the sectarians] customarily carry on a regime of despotism." -- Leon Trotsky.\*

The documents included in this pamphlet deal with a conference sponsored by the so-called "International Committee." Official accounts of the gathering, which was held early in April 1966, are readily available. However, the accounts are far from complete. References to certain happenings remain obscure and puzzling. The documents assembled here make it possible to now fill in these dark areas, at least partially. In view of their educational value, plus the likelihood that they might otherwise be buried in the archives, the Socialist Workers party, which received copies of them by chance, is making them public in this form.

As for the official accounts, their nature can be gathered from the following sentence which appeared in the May 9 Bulletin of International Socialism: "The third International Congress called by the International Committee of the Fourth International, held in London from April 4-8, has been called the most impressive conference of the international Marxist movement since the Founding Conference of the Fourth International in 1938."

The author of these words (Tim Wohlforth?) does not indicate who made this impressive historical judgment. Perhaps it was wise to preserve his anonymity; for the truth is that in the history of the various groups that have proclaimed adherence to Trotskyism, whether justifiably or unjustifiably, it would be difficult to find a conference that opened with such fanfare and ended with such a disaster for its promoters.

The conference, which was guided in its deliberations by Gerry Healy of the Socialist Labour League, did not succeed in one of the main points on its agenda -- to unite the two groups in the United States (Wohlforth and Robertson) that have vied in proclaiming political solidarity with the SLL and each other.

In fact, James Robertson, whom the betrayal caught by complete surprise (he came to believe his own propaganda about Healy being a model leader), was summarily thrown out in the most scandalous way, as can be judged from the documents in the following pages.

The delegation of the Voix Ouvrière [Worker's Voice] group, representing a bigger organization than the existing French component of the "International Committee" (the La Verité [The Truth] group headed by Pierre Lambert), were victims of a comparable sellout. In the middle of the conference

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\*The Transitional Program. Pioneer Publishers. P.56.

Healy suddenly switched the political basis on which they had agreed to participate as observers and served them with an ultimatum to vote for a new line. They walked out.

The conference, anonymously described as the most impressive of its kind since 1938, thus ended up with two splits and what would appear to be a thorough poisoning of relations with the only two formations in the entire international scene, aside from the Wohlforth group and an individual here or there, that have evinced any interest in the politics and perspectives offered by Healy-Lambert.

In one of the documents, Healy contends that he planned this outcome from the very beginning. In response to that boast we can only offer the SLL leader congratulations on his success in organizing the conference in such a way as to make it a completely cut-and-dried affair before it even opened. But was it really necessary to utilize such elaborate means to drive away his closest allies and supporters? It may be, of course, that we should congratulate Healy for no more than an impressive ability to waive aside setbacks and defeats.

Unfortunately no congratulations of any kind to the Robertson and Voix Ouvrière groups seem in order. They don't claim to have planned it that way. However, they might seek consolation in the thought that they asked for it. After all, they were well aware of the fraud built into the very foundation of this conference.

In 1963 the majority of the International Committee participated in a Reunification Congress which brought together on a principled basis the overwhelming majority of the world Trotskyist movement after a ten-year split. Of all the organizations in the International Committee, or sympathetic with its aims, only Healy's Socialist Labour League and Lambert's La Verité group rejected reunification, refusing to go along with the majority. After the International Committee participated in the reunification of the Fourth International, Healy and Lambert set up a rump "International Committee," representing no one but themselves. It was to a conference sponsored by these splitters that the Robertson and Voix Ouvrière groups decided to send observers. What did they expect there? Freedom to voice an opinion? A fair hearing for ideas they wished to advance for consideration? Observance of democratic rights?

They overlooked the undemocratic origin of Healy's "International Committee." It was set up from the very beginning as private property, well posted with "No Trespassing" and "No Hunting" signs -- which ought to have been thought of before responding to the notices in the "Discussions Wanted" column of the Healyite press.

\* \* \*

The testimony of the Robertson delegation on Healy's undemocratic practices, the main subject matter of the documents included here, is well worth study by all those who are interested in the health of the Socialist Labour League and the good name of Trotskyism in the British labor movement.

An apparently trivial incident occurred at the confer-

ence. Robertson was absent from one of the sessions.

In the Socialist Labour League, under National Secretary Healy, something like that is not "trivial." You can be hauled up on charges for it,

That's not all. You must acknowledge your guilt. Moreover, you must admit it in a way to meet some exacting specifications. If you don't, the charges can rapidly escalate.

Thus Robertson found himself, to his consternation, suddenly sinking in quicksand.

(1) He was charged with being absent from a session.

(2) He admitted his guilt.

(3) A motion was passed demanding that he apologize and admit having committed a "petty-bourgeois act."

(4) He apologized in an emphatic way for having been absent but refused to acknowledge that he had committed a "petty-bourgeois act."

(5) The escalation proceeded. Healy, according to Rose J., scored Robertson's absence and his refusal to vote for his condemnation, characterizing it as a "petty-bourgeois, reactionary act expressing the chauvinism of American imperialism, etc."

(6) Robertson was threatened with expulsion if he did not voice approval of the motion branding him with the alleged class nature of his crime.

(7) The dazed man still said, no.

(8) He was expelled.

The incident and the procedures followed in handling it become even more astonishing when examined in detail.

Rose J. reports that Robertson had been sick for three weeks, had spent the night working on a document, and had continued in the morning by presenting his views to the conference. Evidently exhausted, he sought to take a nap. "He mentioned to Comrade Healy that he was going."

Healy states in his letter to H. Turner and Sherwood, "...he asked me if it would be all right to leave the meeting to go to bed since he was working all night on a document.... I told him that I would convey his request to the appropriate comrades controlling the congress..."

This august body met and "unanimously decided that he be requested to return..."

The necessity for an indisposed person to request permission not to attend a session is in itself a scandal. The proper procedure would have been to accept without the slightest question Robertson's admission that he was exhausted. In fact, if it had been learned that he was feeling ill or exhausted, and he had nevertheless insisted on remaining, he

should have been persuaded to at least skip a session and get some rest. The arrangements committee, set up for such purposes in any well-organized gathering, should immediately have seen to it that every facility was made available to the comrade, including prompt medical attention if necessary.

In the evening, again according to Healy, Robertson returned. He was "asked to apologize for not having attended the session."

Robertson, still according to Healy, "refused to do this on the grounds that he did not know the rules. It was pointed out that these rules were implicit in all Bolshevik Congresses, otherwise everyone would do as he pleased."

This set of "implicit" rules for "Bolshevik congresses" is spun out of thin air. Harry Turner is completely in order to demand of Healy, "Can you cite any written precedent in any previous Bolshevik Congress for this rule?" And Turner might well have reminded Healy -- which he didn't, unfortunately -- that without established written rules, or agreed-upon rules placed in the record at the beginning of the gathering, any petty bureaucrat could do as he pleased.

That's aside from the ludicrous pretension that this was a "Bolshevik congress" or anything remotely resembling one.

Turner states that the acknowledgment demanded of Robertson, in view of the accusations leveled at him, would have signified making a "false confession to a petit-bourgeois outlook, American chauvinism, and capitulation to Black Nationalism."

Rose J. can hardly bring herself to say it -- she apologizes for the great man who was steering the conference; it was "a mistake"; it is "almost" a "Stalinist version of democratic-centralism."

No, Comrade Rose J., it was no "mistake"; it was a crime; it is not "almost" a Stalinist version; it is a Stalinist version. No epithet is involved -- that is the correct label for the way National Secretary Healy ran his conference.

Harry Turner sums it up quite accurately in his letter to Healy: "Your attacks on Robertson were designed to make him knuckle under and adopt an attitude of humble worship for the omniscient British leadership. You were not interested in creating a movement united on the basis of democratic centralism with strong sections capable of making theoretical contributions to the movement as a whole and of applying Marxist theory creatively to their own national arenas. You wanted an international after the manner of Stalin's Comintern, permeated with servility at one pole and authoritarianism at the other."

Of course, Healyism is not the equivalent of Stalinism -- meaning the rule of a parasitic bureaucratic caste wielding power in a workers state without checks or controls. Healyism is simply a case of factionalism and cultism, a not uncommon phenomenon among ingrown sects, as Trotsky observed in his time. Thus, fortunately, Healyism is but a grotesque

caricature of Stalinism. After all, the most the tinpot autocrat could do to Robertson was to expel him.

Let us recapitulate. The atmosphere is such that Robertson feels compelled to ask Healy to take up with the "appropriate comrades" in control his need to drop out for a couple of hours. Robertson doesn't simply tell Healy, as would be normal -- "he asked me if it would be all right..." Robertson has in fact already both asked permission and apologized. He apologized for being unable to stay on his feet; he asked permission to lie down. Where are we, on a slave plantation?

Thumbs down, comes the response of the "appropriate comrades" in control. They issue an order. Robertson is to stay on his feet. What should we call this? Insensitivity? Rudeness? Brutality? It is at least a good sample of the bureaucratic mind, all the purer because it lacks even the check of a serious sociological base.

Robertson returns to the next session, feeling, let us hope, no longer near collapse. The welcome he gets does not exactly reflect fraternal interest in his health. His comrades constitute themselves into a court and pass sentence. He must make a formal apology to the body as a whole. It is becoming monstrous!

Robertson, attempting to meet this strange situation, does apologize. He is in a foreign land...among unusual people given to unusual ways. In fact, of all the organizations he has been in, it can safely be said that he has never seen anything like this. He says he didn't know it was against the rules.

The man has claimed ignorance of the law! The inquisition replies at once to that hoary dodge. The rules, if not written down, are "implicit." It's been that way since the time of the Druids. Therefore the apology is rejected. (Harry Turner reports that Robertson made the apology "in a written statement" -- apologies, say these remarkable "implicit" rules, must under no circumstances be left implicit.)

Something more is demanded of the miserable culprit than the squirming half-confession he has offered up to this point. He'd better come clean! But what do they want from him?

The "real political face of Robertson" must be "thoroughly exposed." The "thoroughly reactionary attitude" shown in the written half-confession must be dealt with implacably. The "idealist, pragmatic, petty-bourgeois basis of the Spartacist group" must be brought to light. The inner nature of this two-faced criminal who "retained his greatest venom and hatred for the congress itself" must be exposed before the entire body. (All the phrases in quotation marks appear in Healy's letter to H. Turner and Sherwood.)

Healy and the other "appropriate comrades controlling the congress" dictate an apology for adoption by Robertson. The man must confess that he committed a "petty-bourgeois act"; he must confess the correctness of the charge that he is guilty of "American chauvinism and capitulation to Black Nationalism."



Robertson, however, feels he just can't do it. The response of the judges is swift and merciless. The "Congress," as Healy reports it, "unanimously...decided that he should leave."

But the national secretary, who instigated all this, who is obviously a past master at dishing out super "Bolshevism," plays the cat-and-mouse game. "At this point I proposed a motion that he should stay until the end of the session, thus giving him time to reconsider his position."

Instantly the entire body falls into line; instantly the national secretary's motion is approved. They are like seals who have done all this many times before. Only Voix Ouvrière abstains, as Healy is careful to note. (He mentions it in his letter to H. Turner and Sherwood.)

After the reprieve is up, the victim is again seated in the dock. "Robertson was then asked," continues Healy, "if he would carry out the unanimous request of the Congress and apologize for his attitude towards the Congress." Robertson "refused to do this and was accordingly asked to leave..."

Expelled forthwith! At the end of the same session where he was first confronted with the ultimatum to apologize! In Healy's organization the rope is very short...

Is there anyone who knows the first thing about the abominations of Stalinism whose blood doesn't boil on reading about such procedures?

If such things could occur in an international gathering where Healy presumably had his best foot forward, what is the atmosphere like inside the Socialist Labour League?

For years rumors have circulated in the British labor movement about Healy's methods. Generally the sources turned out to be dissidents who walked out or were expelled from the Socialist Labour League. Some of the stories they told sounded to Trotskyists in other countries like gross exaggerations and thus tended to be discounted as due to factionalism. Yet it had to be noted that in the international scene, Healy's organization was the only one claiming to represent Trotskyism that had such an ugly reputation in the labor movement because of continual tales about gross violations of the democratic rights of its own members.

The facts reported by the Robertson delegation are different from anything yet revealed since they come from people who were pathetically loyal to Healy and who could scarcely believe their eyes as they witnessed what was happening. Their report of how Healy expelled Robertson, backed as it is by Healy's own boasts and admissions, is utterly convincing. And all the more so in view of their reiteration, after the event, that they still have no political differences with him -- even on Cuba, which Healy holds to be capitalist and which they maintain is a workers state!

One can well appreciate why the Wohlforth group, as shown by one of the documents, is afraid to agree to hold even a debate with another group without first getting approval from Big Brother. What if he should jerk the rug

they're standing on! And so Wohlforth, who used to take pride in standing in opposition to no matter whom, ends up as a rubber stamp for a...Healy.

\* \* \*

But let us move on. With the exception of the article by Georges Kaldy, the documents included here touch on the political issues only incidentally. This, of course, is due to the nature of the material. The authors of the correspondence were dealing with what was really going on at the conference and what was most important to them and the members of their groups. Their political interpretations, which are something else again, can be found in their publications. Unfortunately, with all their studied poses, self-delusion, wrong theories, sectarian attitudes and carelessness about facts, what they write for the public is generally simply boring. Certainly it doesn't compare in educational value with this material in which the real world they live in tends to break through.

Kaldy's article about the famous conference lacks this vitality. Writing for the Voix Ouvrière audience, the author is concerned about maintaining a certain public image which apparently can admit to dueling but not to brawling -- at least when the weapons are broken beer bottles à la Healy. We have made it available in an English translation as a courtesy inasmuch as it is rather doubtful that this service will be rendered by either Healy, Wohlforth or Robertson.

The most interesting political question is: What brought these groupings to stage an international conference if a face-to-face confrontation would only cause them to fly apart?

It is as easy to find the answer as it is to put the question. Their common opposition to the Fourth International and the Socialist Workers party -- which they claim is really opposition to "Pabloism" -- brought them together. The uneven development of the different groups in their evolution away from Trotskyism caused them to split, an outcome none of them foresaw.

This becomes completely clear if considered against the background. Among the key issues that led Healy, the main figure at the conference, to separate from the majority of the world Trotskyist movement a few years ago was a difference in appreciation of the colonial revolution, its importance and its course of development. The dispute occurred concretely over the events in Cuba which led to the overthrow of capitalism under the leadership of Fidel Castro.

Healy decided that nothing fundamentally decisive had really happened in Cuba. To this day he maintains that Cuba is capitalist.

A free discussion of several years' duration was held in the Socialist Workers party on the nature and results of the Cuban Revolution. The party ranks almost in their entirety decided that Cuba was a workers state.

This view, which had been reached in parallel fashion

by the International Secretariat of the Fourth International, became a strong element in healing the ten-year breach in the world Trotskyist movement.

At the same time, the outcome of the discussion greatly intensified the differences that had already appeared between the Socialist Workers party and the Socialist Labour League. In the Socialist Workers party, Robertson and Wohlforth, who stood in a minority on this question, were drawn politically toward Healy. He in turn decided that the best field of practical activity for them in the United States was to serve as a faction in the SWP run by remote control from London. This brought them into increasing violations of discipline, the upshot of which, after several warnings over a considerable period, was their expulsion.

Despite their common adherence to Healyism, Robertson and Wohlforth had differences with each other, including the tactical side of their struggle against the SWP. Unable to resolve these differences by themselves, they turned to Healy as the arbiter and were thus led into competition for his favor. Healy preferred Wohlforth, the main reasons being that Wohlforth came closer to sharing his ultraleft sectarian views on Cuba and on black nationalism as well as displaying a flattering degree of appreciation for the thought of Healy, particularly on the organizational level. However as can be gathered from the correspondence made available here, Healy's choice of Wohlforth was not generally accepted, particularly among Robertson's followers. To complicate matters, the Wohlforth contingent was outnumbered by the other group. Thus if the two groups were combined, Robertson would exercise a majority. How to get around that without appearing to be against majority rule? A ticklish question!

Healy maneuvered for time, deferring consummation of the projected unification of the two groups, probably in hope that Wohlforth might pick up enough at Robertson's expense to gain a majority.

However, the scheme could not be put across in time for the conference. Healy delayed no longer. As Rose J. reports it in a letter included in this collection, "Mike Banda said the next day -- 'we decided to make war on you!'" That was when the moment of truth came for Robertson. Or as Rose J. so graphically puts it, that was when "the bull hit the fan."

From a certain point of view, of course, it could be said that it was only a case of destiny utilizing Healy as a blind instrument to mete out poetic justice on Robertson for the way he flouted majority rule in the Socialist Workers party for such a long period. Or, as a Freudian might see it -- it was just a case of Robertson demonstrating once again that he is faction prone.

It is not clear from the documents how the Voix Ouvrière group really fitted into the strategy, explained rather boastfully by Healy in his letter to H. Turner and Sherwood, which called for inviting them to come to his conference so they could be kicked out of it.

Possibly this was Lambert's contribution to the masterful wheeling and dealing. Healy favored it because he is in

sad need of international reinforcements and because, in his general ignorance of things outside Britain, the declamations of the Voix Ouvrière group against "Pabloism" sounded very good -- good enough to warrant putting them on the list for a ticket to the conference, compliments of the house.

When Healy learned during the conference for the first time what the group really stood for, he was flabbergasted. Some kind of state caps! China, these "theoreticians" maintained, is still capitalist although it is obviously a workers state, as all the facts show. What does that make the Voix Ouvrière group but state capitalist? Their position on China, in truth, sounded almost indistinguishable from Healy's own position on Cuba. Instead of being the fox, as he had thought, he was in the position of the goose. There were no if's, and's or but's about it; he had to get out of the trap...fast! With the energy typical of the man, he went to work at once; and, of course, succeeded beautifully. As he himself testifies, that was the plan from the beginning...

What did the wily politicians of Voix Ouvrière see in the conference? Probably a heterogeneous, amusingly ignorant, thoroughly unconscious grouping of British Insulars, American colonials and French syndicalists who stood at the beginning of a familiar enough road, one they themselves had traveled since they split from the Fourth International a quarter of a century ago. Now given an opportunity through a lucky break to play the role of teachers and mentors to a contingent already far enough advanced to be considered fellow travelers, they were only doing their duty in bringing consciousness into the common deliberations. Besides, in the way of immediate practical dividends, they stood a good chance of chipping off something, particularly from Lambert's group.

On the political and theoretical level, the Voix Ouvrière delegation was not far wrong in their estimate of the conference. All these groups do stand at different milestones along the same road.

By taking the position that the state in Cuba today is capitalist in character, Healy, for instance, places in question the Trotskyist position that China, North Vietnam, North Korea, Yugoslavia and the other countries in Eastern Europe have overthrown capitalism and established workers states. He does this by virtue of the fact that in all these cases the same basic criteria apply as in Cuba. Healy was challenged on this during the internal discussion in the SWP on the subject; as yet he has not bothered to respond. Probably it is beyond his depth. Nevertheless, the view that all these countries are state capitalist is the logical conclusion to Healy's position on Cuba. Or rather it is a logical stage in the possible evolution of Healy's state capitalist position on Cuba, for by the same reasoning, the Soviet Union is state capitalist and it can even be questioned that it was anything but state capitalist in the time of Lenin and Trotsky.

Such a view is erroneous, of course, so glaringly erroneous that even Healy draws back when a group like Voix Ouvrière congratulates him on his progress and beckons him to proceed further.

\* \* \*

Last December, while Healy was getting out the publicity for his coming circus, the Fourth International held the Second Congress since Reunification (the eighth since the movement was founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938). There was no attempt at describing it as more than it was, or pulling any bluffs.

Differences of opinion on some points were freely expressed at the congress. This was expected and, in fact, was welcomed as an indication of the democracy and free atmosphere reigning in the internal life of the movement.

It was a serious gathering of delegates and observers from well-established sections and parties in a number of countries. Their main objective was to consolidate the reunification, bring the main political analyses of the movement up to date, and open a new stage of expansion for the world Trotskyist movement.

These aims were accomplished and a period of healthy growth can be expected on the basis of the very solid gains made since the reunification of the movement in 1963. The periodic funeral orations pronounced by its enemies have not succeeded in convincing the Fourth International that it is dead. It is very much alive and its prospects are excellent.

\* \* \*

Since the documents included in this pamphlet all emanate from groupings that maintain that the Fourth International is either dead, bankrupt or sadly in need of reconstruction -- due, as they explain it, to the influence of Pablo -- it is not without interest that they have a significant new recruit to the gloomy view that the International founded by Trotsky must be buried or rebuilt from the ground up. The new recruit is Pablo himself. Pablo split after the Reunification Congress as a result of deepening political differences. He finally came to the conclusion that under its present leadership the Fourth International is finished and he gave up his option under the rules of democratic centralism of trying to win over a majority of the membership to his views.

Will the crepehangers welcome this distinguished newcomer to their ranks? They seem embarrassed. But Pablo's voice, it must be admitted, does blend in rather harmoniously with Healy's. Perhaps Healy should consider the question more closely.

Is it possible that Healy would seek a bloc with Pablo against the Fourth International? I would not venture to reply in the affirmative. On the other hand, Georges Kaldy of Voix Ouvrière, after the recent first-hand experience with Healy at the most impressive conference of its kind since 1938, deserves to be listened to attentively. His judgment of Healy and his circle is that "even in denouncing Pabloism, they could not rid themselves of the Pabloist methods of analysis." With "Pabloism" that deeply ingrained in your system, nothing is ruled out, is it?

186a Clapham High Street,  
London, S.W.4, England  
16th March, 1966

VERY URGENT  
AWAITING YOUR REPLY IMMEDIATELY

Jim Robertson

Dear Comrade,

I have heard this afternoon from one of our Central Committee members who has seen Cde. Tishman, that you may not be attending the International Conference which is being held from April 4th - 8th.

This will indeed be a big setback to the Conference since we want you as well as representatives of the Wohlforth group to be here. Cde. Tishman cannot under any circumstances be regarded as a representative of yours at this conference. He has no real knowledge of the present situation in the United States and he was not present at the Montreal discussions.

I am therefore asking you urgently to attend this Conference of the international movement, otherwise there cannot be in my opinion any real settlement of the problems in the United States.

Enclosed is a copy of a letter I have sent to Cde. Wohlforth.

GH/JS  
(Copy to Wohlforth)

Yours fraternally,  
/s/ G. Healy  
National Secretary

\* \* \*

186a Clapham High Street,  
London, S.W.4, England  
16th March, 1966

VERY URGENT  
AWAITING YOUR REPLY

Tim Wohlforth

Dear Comrade,

I am enclosing a copy of a letter I am sending to Cde. Robertson. It seems to me absolutely impermissible that neither you nor he should attend the International Conference.

Please understand that you cannot manoeuvre with the international movement. No matter what your difficulties are with your work in the United States, you and he must attend. I will personally take the floor at the conference and oppose both your absences.

GH/JS  
(Copy to Robertson)

Yours fraternally,  
G. HEALY  
National Secretary

New York  
9 April 1966

TO ALL LOCALS, ORGANIZING COMMITTEES, AND MEMBERS AT LARGE:

Word has arrived by phone from our delegation that the SLL and the IC have broken off unity with Spartacist! The break came in the form of a full, savage attack on the Spartacist by the SLL that totaled 18 hours. The attack was artificially precipitated by a super-inflated incident. Our delegation arrived late at one of the sessions. Upon arrival they were confronted with an attack from the floor by Healy and the SLL leadership characterizing their absence as an example of "American arrogance and chauvinism" and "petty-bourgeois indiscipline." We were denounced at one point or another as "Pabloites", anti-democratic centralists, being in a bloc with the SWP, etc., etc. These attacks will continue in the pages of the Newsletter. The ACFI delegation participated fully in the assault. Fred Mazelis did a better job than Slaughter (leading SLL'er) in denouncing us and explaining why we had to be broken or driven from the movement. After the ridiculous incident -- coming late to a session without informing the chairman when no prior mention of such a "special rule" had been made -- had been so grotesquely inflated, a verbal apology to the IC Conference for our "petty-bourgeois indiscipline" was demanded of Comrades Robertson and our delegation. We of course refused and in a prepared statement stated that this was a violation of Leninist practice and represented singling out of the Spartacist for special "treatment", using fear and intimidation as substitutes for international discipline based on political consciousness, and that to apologize would be to vote for false charges. After attacks and denunciations (with other IC delegates beaten into line by the SLL), we were expelled from the Conference. It was clear that, whatever incident was utilized, the attack on us had been planned before-hand. Michael Banda, editor of Newsletter, stated that they had decided to declare war on the "Americans" and the French "Voix Ouvriere" group. The VO group was also driven from the Conference after being similarly attacked.

Remarks made by Healy, as well as examination of previous experience with Healy (1962 and the Northern Conference) indicate that this was an attempt to blackjack us into "submission", figuring that the process of unity had gone too far for us to pull back and that we would have to submit.

There are preliminary indications that a number of the members of ACFI are determined to consummate unity no matter what. We are not hostile to the members of ACFI, and remain in political solidarity with the International Committee. Whoever rejects this move by the SLL and wishes to solidarize himself with the Spartacist will be welcomed.

ALL PUBLIC SALES OF THE NEWSLETTER AND THE ACFI BULLETIN WILL BE DISCONTINUED IMMEDIATELY.]

Until further notice this information must be kept inside our organization. We will have detailed information upon the arrival of our delegation on Monday.

We must stand firm in the face of this unprincipled attack. Nothing must get in the way of building a revolutionary movement here as part of the rebuilding of the Fourth International. Attempts may be made to "raid" our membership. Any communications or contact from ACFI or IC members should be reported immediately to the REB. A full report of the Conference and the break by the SLL will be mimeographed and sent out as soon as information is received or our delegation returns.

Granite Hardness!!  
A. Nelson, National Office



London, 9 April 1966

To the Bay Area Spartacist Committee:

Dear Comrades,

I am sending this letter to you as a member of the Bay Area Spartacist Committee who was also a member of the delegation to the IC conference. As you know, we have been kicked out of the conference on the contrived groups [grounds?] of a breach of democratic centralism.

The immediate circumstances:

Many delegates and observers had been absent from parts of one or another session. Jim, who had been sick for 3 weeks and had spent the night working on a document, and had made a presentation of the Spartacist's views in the morning, went over to take a nap in the afternoon. He mentioned to Comrade Healy that he was going. The next thing we knew, there was an announcement from the chairman that Jim had "requested" to be absent from this session. Then the bull hit the fan. The SLL was very angry because it seems that Comrade Mike Banda had prepared an answer to our views on Cuba. The rest of the delegation might have made it clearer that these views were not a personal contribution but from the Spartacist, and that the delegation had caucused over these points, although I did speak to explain why the charges of black nationalism which were leveled against us were unfounded and ludicrous. There was no basis for singling out Jim from among those who had missed parts of sessions. We were sharply aware of our junior status at the conference and felt that our contribution to the discussion would evoke little response.

All this is beside the point, for the incident was then used by Comrade Healy to open a vitriolic attack against the Spartacist organization. Healy said that Jim's absence from the session, and refusal to state that this absence was a petty-bourgeois act, was deemed an act of contempt -- a petty-bourgeois, reactionary act expressing the chauvinism of American Imperialism, etc. Gerry kept saying that he's dealt with arrogant Americans before, Cannon and Hansen, and if there is one thing the Americans have to learn it is to take orders.

It became clear to us at this point that the SLL was using this to attack and exclude the Spartacist from the conference (as Mike Banda said the next day -- "we decided to make war on you!"). In hindsight, it was probably a mistake for Jim not to have attended that session, or to have done or said anything which could be misinterpreted, for that matter.

But I'm very saddened and fearful of the kind of mistake which leads the SLL to an almost Stalinist version of democratic-centralism. This concept of obeying the majority will to the extent of declaring oneself a petty-bourgeois expression of American chauvinism is quite dangerous and is part of the "methods" of fake Bolshevik discipline such as that practiced by the SWP to avoid political struggle with factions.

At the conference, there were signs of weakness on the

obedience question. The fight they pick with us will enable them to rally their forces around for a while, but their capacity to maintain this kind of obedience won't last. In other words, they're in for some problems.

A very sad effect is that this lets the SWP with their rotten politics and organizational methods off the hook for a time. The SLL, like the SWP, has raised a similar type of "Bolshevik discipline" to a basic political principle, a methodological concept which supposedly differentiates working-class organizations from petty-bourgeois organizations.

So, I guess, in addition to turning outward to educate people on Trotskyism, we will be dealing with a lot of attacks from the SLL and Wohlforth. So, shortly you will be getting the reports and documents from the conference.

We are very much in agreement with the basic principles of the IC. The strongest and best worked out point is on the crisis of leadership, though with the sectarian leadership of the SLL, this necessity of revolutionary leadership has been distorted in three areas: 1) the colonial revolutions, 2) the serious defeats, such as Indonesia, which are seen merely as a reflection of an increasing crisis of capitalism and the bureaucracy, rather than setbacks for the working class in addition, and 3) the inability to assimilate other groups, such as Voix Ouvrière and ourselves, which should be a part of the IC.

Well, on to a study of the French IC and the Voix Ouvrière groups. I find myself quite curious about them and the rest of the continent. My address in Paris will be in care of the Thomas Cook Travel Agency, 2 Place de la Madeleine (mark "Passenger's Mail").

With warm and comradely greetings,

Rose J.

P.S. We have gotten some news from some of the other observers at the conference about what went on after we left. ACFI was the brunt of some attacks, evidently aimed at making clear once again just who is boss. Also a motion was proposed by Lambert, head of the French IC section, and adopted as part of the work of the Commission on rebuilding the F.I. It reads: "We agree to democratic centralism and intervention in principle, but at present it is impossible. The only method of arriving at decisions that remains possible at present is the principle of unanimity." This contradicts the excuses which were used to get rid of both the Voix Ouvrière group and the Spartacist, since 1) the attack on Voix Ouvrière was based on the assertion that the F.I. as an organization has not been destroyed (how can this be squared with the "impossibility" of democratic centralism?) 2) the demand for an apology was justified as the necessity for Spartacist to abide by the majority will through democratic centralism. The observers, from the Ceylonese LSSP(R) and the Danish Trotskyist party, previously sympathetic to the IC, were repelled by Healy and the SLL. They no longer believe that the IC under the leadership of the SLL can rebuild the Fourth International.

London

15th April, 1966.

To: Cde. H. Turner and  
Cde. Sherwood

Dear Comrades,

We concluded the Third Congress of the International Committee of the Fourth International a week ago.

There were present at this Congress delegates from Japan, Greece, France, Hungary and Britain. Those from the Congo and Nigeria were unable to obtain the necessary papers on time. There were observers from Denmark, Germany, Iraqi students in Great Britain, the French youth section Revolt, Young Socialists in Britain, Ceylon, the Voix Ouvrière in France, the American Committee for the F.I. and the Spartacist group from the United States.

The main political resolution and report before the Conference was adopted with only one vote against (Japan), his difference being that he and his group considered China state capitalist.

The main political struggle at the Congress consisted in an attempt by the Voix Ouvrière group, and supported to some extent by the Hungarian delegate, to declare that the Fourth International had in fact collapsed and would have to be reorganised completely.

Considerable discussion took place on this point which in the opinion of the Congress was an attempt to play down the historical and theoretical struggle of the F.I. and in this way to open up the gates for an anti-theory tendency, especially represented by the syndicalist Voix Ouvrière. This trend was decisively repudiated.

As a result, the Congress in a very powerful way vindicated the fight of Trotsky in relation to Marxist theory and opened up the way to reconstitute the Fourth International on a very solid political foundation.

A discussion revealed the connection between the theoretical struggle of the F.I. and party building today. It was in my opinion the most important congress of our movement since the founding congress in 1938.

From the beginning of the Congress it was clear that the Robertson delegation were not at home in a Congress of this description. The English comrades made them as comfortable as possible and treated them with every courtesy due to visiting members from another country. It was clear, however, from the start that the relations within the delegation resembled that of a clique. We had the impression that insofar as Robertson said things that were correct he was in fact attempting to hide his real political opinions.

Things came to a head on the third day of the Congress when he made a report on the United States. He especially disagreed with the main line of the report made on behalf of the I.C. by Cde. Slaughter. He claimed that their role in the

United States could only be that of a propaganda group, and in his speech implicitly adopted the Posadas attitude on Cuba, as a deformed workers' state. Immediately after his report Conference broke for lunch and at the end of the meal, he asked me if it would be all right to leave the meeting to go to bed since he was working all night on a document. It should be understood here that Robertson had had at least four months to prepare this document prior to the Congress which he had not done. Instead he brought the anti-Trotskyist Mage into one meeting of the Negotiating Committee which this renegade effectively broke up. I told him that I would convey his request to the appropriate comrades controlling the congress and when the session resumed it was unanimously decided that he be requested to return to the Congress in order to hear the debate on his report. He refused to do this.

A number of delegates, including M. Banda, sharply criticised his report while his delegation remained silent. As soon as he returned to the evening session where the final summing up was to be made by Cde. Slaughter, he was asked to apologise to the Congress for not having attended the session. He refused to do this on the grounds that he did not know the rules. It was pointed out that these rules were implicit in all Bolshevik Congresses, otherwise everyone would do as he pleased. He refused to apologise and the Congress unanimously, including the observers from the Voix Ouvrière, decided that he should leave. At this point I proposed a motion that he should stay until the end of the session, thus giving him time to reconsider his position. This was approved with the Voix Ouvrière abstaining.

At the end of this session, Robertson while voting for the main amended resolution, abstained on the report of Cde. Slaughter on the grounds that he disagreed with the position in the United States. In relation to the theoretical continuity of the Fourth International he voted for the midway position of Cde. Varga who at this point had proposed an amendment which was unanimously rejected, apart from the vote of the Hungarian delegation. Varga subsequently rejected Robertson's support as unprincipled.

Robertson was then asked if he would carry out the unanimous request of the Congress and apologise for his attitude towards the Congress. He refused to do this and was accordingly asked to leave, with the proviso that the remainder of his delegation could remain and participate in the Congress. The content of Robertson's statement was to the effect that Congress had no right to ask him to do something he did not want to do and this was not a Leninist conception. I need not stress to you comrades the thoroughly reactionary attitude shown in this statement. It confirmed the opinion formed by all the leading comrades in the Congress of the idealist, pragmatic, petty-bourgeois basis of the Spartacist group. The Greek delegate, a comrade 76 years old who had been in the Trotskyist movement since its foundation asked Robertson to apologise and the latter laughed in his face. The decision to remove Robertson was unanimous, delegates and observers alike.

Prior to this episode, the Voix Ouvrière group had submitted a statement that if we did not recognise that Trotsky's Fourth International was completely finished and

needed to be rebuilt then they could not stay at the Congress. An appeal to them was made to stay and fight for their position but regardless of this they walked out of the Congress. When Robertson was asked as to his attitude to the Voix Ouvrière group behaviour, he declared that he thought they were good comrades but misguided. He retained his greatest venom and hatred for the congress itself, which he said had driven them out. In the debate preceding Robertson being asked to leave, many comrades dealt with this unprincipled amalgam and thoroughly exposed the real political face of Robertson. It must be stressed to all who are interested that the Congress was completely unanimous on the Robertson question. There have been far too many experiences of the role of cults and cliques in the Trotskyist movement, from Field in the early 30's to Abern, Johnson and Haston in England. The essential basis of these combinations has always been anti-centralist.

Robertson would have liked a charter for a unified section in the United States with which he could do as he pleased, while strictly excluding the politics of the International except those aspects with which he had particular agreement. To have effected a unification on this basis would have been disastrous and would have strengthened the anti-internationalist trend of the S.W.P.

Some comrades might ask if our Montreal meeting served a useful purpose. We are confident that it did. We knew from the beginning the anti-internationalist attitude of this man and his tendency when they split from the Wohlforth group, but it was necessary to clarify before the entire international movement their real political positions. That is why we postponed the actual unification until after the International Congress. We had to bring him to the Congress the same as Voix Ouvrière in order to reveal the nature of these tendencies.

Some comrades might believe that our movement has taken a step back because there will be no unification. This is an entirely superficial activist conception of building the revolutionary party in the United States. Our movement in the United States has been considerably strengthened in a qualitative way. We can now proceed to draw the real lines of political differences between ourselves and Robertson. This group may for a while exist on the basis of renewed hostile activity towards the International Committee. In this, of course, it will find many supporters amongst the American radical petty bourgeois. But it cannot last because it has no political future. We think that the basis for the building of the movement in the United States must be on correct internationalist Trotskyist foundations. That is why we hope you will understand what took place at the Congress. If you have any points which you wish to write to me about I will be very pleased to answer them.

Yours fraternally,

G. Healy

New York, New York

April 30, 1966

Dear Comrade Healy,

Cde. Sherwood and I wish to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of April 15, 1966 in which you present an account of events at the London conference of the International Committee of the Fourth International. We, for our part, wish to acquaint you with our own approach and that of the Spartacist comrades prior to the conference as well as our reaction to the proceedings.

Spartacist recognizes its historic responsibility for the development of a working-class vanguard in the stronghold of world capitalism and the significance of this vanguard for mankind's future. Our members consequently hailed the unity agreement between Spartacist and the American Committee for the Fourth International arrived at in Montreal as an important step in the process of building this revolutionary vanguard and wholeheartedly welcomes the prospect of the re-establishment of an international of revolutionary Marxism.

Meaningful unity, in practical activity and in the progressive elimination of political differences between Spartacist and ACFI, seemed to be developing -- toward the SWP, on the Negro Question, and on economic perspectives in the United States. We therefore saw excellent prospects ahead for the rapid growth and influence of the Spartacist League-to-be. Similarly, we foresaw a reconstructed F.I. gaining in numbers and influence on a world scale, particularly now that the ideological shipwreck of the Pabloist revisionists following events in Algeria, Indonesia, Cuba, and Africa.

The possibility that Cde. Robertson would be expelled or that the Voix Ouvrière group would withdraw from the conference was never entertained by any of our members. Extraordinary attention was therefore paid by the New York local membership to the full account of the positions and actions of our delegates and to the conference proceedings presented to them two days before the receipt of your letter. Your account of the conference serves to reinforce the report by Cde. Robertson and makes very clear that the Socialist Labour League leadership which organized and directed the conference, and you in particular, chose to focus on and magnify either secondary theoretical differences or minor procedural disagreements in the spirit of Stalinist monolithism and not in a manner consistent with Trotskyist principle and organizational practice.

Thus, the SLL leadership insisted on the V.O. group giving up the erroneous conception held since 1943 that the F.I. had been both organizationally and politically destroyed, refused to accept Cde. Varga's amendment that the world movement had managed to maintain political continuity, and treated the Spartacist delegation's support to Cde. Varga's amendment as a monstrous deviation. You fulminate about an "unprincipled amalgam". Yet our document, "Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International" written in 1963 and reprinted in our first edition of SPARTACIST in February-March 1964 states that

the manifestation of the "...theoretical, political, and organizational crisis" of Trotskyism"... has been the disappearance of the Fourth International as a meaningful structure.", that "The struggle for the Fourth International is the struggle for a program embodying the working-class revolutionary perspective of Marxism.", and that "The Trotskyists, lineal continuers of the earlier stage, have an indispensable contribution to make to this struggle [the overthrow of the Soviet bureaucracy]: the concept of the international party and of a transitional program required to carry through the political revolution." As can be seen, Spartacist held a position identical with Cde. Varga's amendment for approximately three years. Moreover, you were thoroughly acquainted with this position, or should have been. Had Cde. Varga not presented his amendment to the conference, it would have been completely correct for our delegation to have done so.

You similarly attacked Cde. Robertson's report for reaffirming Spartacist's position on Cuba as a deformed workers' state -- a position also held by us for at least three years. You did this despite the existence of complete programmatic agreement between the SLL, ACFI, and Spartacist on this question, e.g., overthrow of the Bonapartist bureaucracy, establishing of workers' power, unconditional defense of the Cuban Revolution, etc. Your letter seems to indicate that our Cuba position came as a surprise to you. Yet our documents, both internal and external, e.g., SPARTACIST Nos. 2 and 3, have been made available to you over the years. Furthermore, you personally engaged in extended debate on just this question with Spartacist comrades in Montreal last winter. You must also have been aware that Spartacist was prepared to subordinate this position, as a democratic centralist organization, to that of the world movement after full discussion and binding vote.

Again you attack Cde. Robertson in your letter for stating that Spartacist sees the immediate tasks of revolutionary Marxists in the U.S. to be the building of a viable propagandist organization. You must be aware that Robertson meant by this what Lenin meant when he wrote of the work of the propagandist who "counts in thousands" and who must "still concentrate on winning the proletariat's vanguard" (Left-wing Communism). You must certainly be acquainted with Spartacist's record of involvement in trade-union, anti-war, and Negro rights struggles, and therefore have known that Robertson was not proposing a literary orientation for the movement in the U.S., but merely pointing out that our activity at this time can only have an exemplary quality and cannot pose the question of leading the class.

Your account of the conference is both malicious and dishonest. Thus you do not indicate that Robertson had, in effect, apologized to the conference for missing a session in a written statement which pointed out that he had not been aware of the European rules of procedure and that no discourtesy to the conference had been intended. Neither do you indicate that the apology you had demanded would have been a de-meaning and false confession to a petit-bourgeois outlook, American chauvinism, and capitulation to Black Nationalism.

Your statement that from the start "...relations within the delegation resembled that of a clique" and that Robertson

initially tried to "hide his real political opinions" is contrary to all that is known about Cde. Robertson and the actual relations obtaining within Spartacist. It is because Robertson and the members of our tendency are not trimmers and would not call a centrist swamp a revolutionary organization that a split in the Revolutionary Tendency was engineered by Wohlforth and Muller with your help in 1962. It was precisely the refusal by Robertson and other members of our tendency to hide their real political opinions that enabled Wohlforth and Muller to conspire with the SWP majority to have our tendency expelled. It is just because Robertson and the members of Spartacist do not conceal their views that their positions have been completely consistent and have stood the test of time from 1962 until today -- on the Negro, the Russian (China, Cuba) and the American Questions. Compare this record with Wohlforth's gyrations!

As for Cde. Robertson and relations within Spartacist, Robertson owes his position of leadership in our organization to his knowledge of Marxism, his devotion to the revolutionary movement, and to the quality of his leadership. Robertson, more than any other leader of our organization, is responsible for the fact that Spartacist has attempted to function as a model Bolshevik organization. Thus, Spartacist is democratic centralist in character with minorities having the right to publish and express their views within the organization and to representation on higher bodies. The minutes of our local and central committee meetings will show both the dynamic interaction of ideas and the unity in action of a revolutionary Marxist organization.

Your characterization of Shane Mage as an anti-Trotskyist renegade who broke up a session of the negotiations of the Joint Unity Committee after being "brought" into it by Robertson is also spiteful and untrue. Mage has recently and publicly revealed political differences with Spartacist which, in our opinion, effectively removes him from the ranks of revolutionary Marxists. However, he is neither anti-Trotskyist nor a renegade. Mage was a central committee member at that time and, therefore, had every right to attend a session of the JUC. He was "brought" into the session because of his considerable background in economics and before his differences with Spartacist had emerged. It was not Mage who broke up the meeting but Wohlforth! Wohlforth deliberately aborted the perspectives discussion by failing to respond to criticisms raised by Mage and other Spartacist representatives. Your purpose in interjecting Mage's name into your report is clearly an attempt to identify Spartacist's politics with Mage's present outlook. An old trick, Cde. Healy! On this basis, the SLL could be smeared with the present politics of Ken Coates, Peter Fryer, or Brian Behan.

Several other questionable points require answers which were raised either by your letter or at the conference.

You indicate that "implicit" rules of procedure "in all Bolshevik Congresses" prevent a member of a delegation from absenting himself without prior permission from the Congress. Can you cite any written precedent in any previous Bolshevik Congress for this rule?



Do the minutes of the third day of the Congress indicate that Voix Ouvrière voted with the Congress to expel Robertson? Did anyone from the V.O. group or observers from other groups witness the incident you recount in which Robertson was supposed to have laughed in the face of the 76 year old Greek delegate who asked him to apologize? I must inform you that a copy of your letter is being sent to the V.O. group and to other delegates for their answers to the above questions.

You state in your letter that you brought the Spartacist delegation to the London conference (at great expenditure of their money and time) only to expose "before the entire international movement their real positions." How can we reconcile this statement with your expressed views in Montreal last winter about the necessity and desirability of unity based upon our agreement with the I.C. perspectives resolution and our agreement with other fundamental documents of Trotskyism, e.g., the transitional program, and the principles embodied in the decisions of the first four congresses of the Communist International? When were you being dishonest, then or now?

Much was made at the conference of Robertson's supposed American chauvinism. Why does your letter not say a word about this?

A final question, assuming for a moment that Cde. Robertson is the individual you say he is, when in the history of revolutionary Marxism has the personality and attitudes of an individual rather than the politics and program of a movement been the basis for a decision on unity? Can you offer a single precedent?

You indicate that Spartacist "may for a while exist on the basis of renewed hostile activity toward the International Committee." This concept is also completely erroneous. We have never initiated hostile activity toward the I.C. and do not contemplate it now. We intend to maintain a correct attitude toward the I.C. indicating that we share with them the same spectrum of political views. We consider ourselves to be a part of international revolutionary Marxism. We will defend ourselves from public attack, but it is not our desire to advertise the unprincipled attacks on Cde. Robertson and Spartacist by the SLL leadership. We will, of course, reserve the right to disagree publicly with the SLL when we do so in principle.

We cannot help feeling bitter about the temporary setback to the world movement and to our prospects in the U.S. We hold the SLL leadership responsible for this and for the resultant aid and comfort given to the SWP and to Pabloist revisionists internationally. You have also given delight to Stalinists of all varieties who have for years attacked Trotskyists as unprincipled splitters.

The reason for the behavior of the SLL leadership toward the Spartacist delegation is not hard to find. You obviously wish to create a Trotskyist movement in the U.S. which would be completely subservient to the SLL leadership. Your attacks on Robertson were designed to make him knuckle under and adopt an attitude of humble worship for the

omniscient British leadership. You were not interested in creating a movement united on the basis of democratic centralism with strong sections capable of making theoretical contributions to the movement as a whole and of applying Marxist theory creatively to their own national arenas. You wanted an international after the manner of Stalin's Comintern, permeated with servility at one pole and authoritarianism at the other. You are attempting to fashion an international modeled after the internal regime of the SLL and currently in vogue in your youth movement.

The question is why such a profoundly anti-Leninist organizational approach should exist. Your origin from a bureaucratically degenerated Communist movement and your carry-over of organizational practices obtaining there may be a factor as may traditional petit-bourgeois British insularity acting to produce a caricature of internationalism. An adequate answer will have to be sought in the historical development of an SLL leadership molded under the pressures of social classes. "Any serious fight in the party is always in the final analysis a reflection of the class struggle," said Trotsky.

The bureaucratic practices of the SLL leadership would seem to relate to the theoretical incapacity shown by the followers of Trotsky after the second World War with the development of deformed workers' states in Eastern Europe and China. Under conditions of pronounced isolation of the world movement from the working class, the revisionists abandoned a working-class revolutionary perspective for an orientation toward petit-bourgeois formations such as Stalinist bureaucrats, social-democratic labor bureaucrats, and the nationalist leaderships of the colonial countries. The British Trotskyists while having correctly and necessarily attacked the revisionists for their capitulations, have similarly demonstrated an incapacity to creatively develop Marxism, as witness their current position on Cuba as a capitalist state. The British leaders seem to have responded to the "theoretical, political, and organizational crisis" of Trotskyism by retreating into "orthodoxy." Their reaction to revisionism seems to have been that of high priests entrusted with the protection of holy writ; thus the emergence of an iron-fisted, authoritarian leadership.

Bureaucratic centralism is also an abandonment of the working class in its own way. The bureaucratic centralism of the SLL, in separating the top leadership from the party ranks, acts to reinforce the isolation of the movement from the working class and from validation of the party's tactics and program. Certain sectarian and ultra-left approaches by the SLL in the recent past are explainable on this basis: for example your bragging that at the Morecambe Young Socialist conference, your youth tore up the leaflets of the Young Communist League distributors and "sent them packing." A contradiction has now developed between the organizational methods which were possible under conditions of deep isolation from the working class of a numerically weak movement and the present position and potential of the British workers under conditions whereby decaying British capitalism is attempting a solution to its problems on the backs of these same workers. The prospects for British Trotskyism are bright with the SLL currently the largest party of Trotskyism in the

world and having a large base among British youth.

For these bright prospects to be realized, it is essential that the SLL abandon the organizational methods now prevalent under the regime of Healy and Banda. These methods will act as a brake on the future development of the movement and prevent the SLL from meeting its responsibility, now being placed on the historical agenda, to root itself in the working class and give it leadership.

The desire to manipulate and dictate to other national sections is a negation of internationalism. Unfortunately, some of our new, young cadres and potential recruits may take the bureaucratic behavior of the SLL leadership for good internationalist coin and thereby be drawn toward a narrow, ingrown nationalism. We shall do everything in our power to guard against such a development. We well know that the abandonment of internationalism leads to the political death of revolutionists. It is our hope that future developments will soon enable Trotskyists to unite to provide the international working class with the vanguard movement without which world capitalism, the enemy of mankind, cannot be vanquished.

This response to your letter was formulated by both Cde. Sherwood and myself. We would be pleased to receive your reaction to it.

Fraternally yours,

Harry Turner

COMMENTS ON THE LETTER OF COMRADE HEALY TO COMRADES  
TURNER AND SHERWOOD ON THE THIRD CONFERENCE  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

Healy's discussion on the debate over the state of the Fourth International is rather unsatisfactory. As a matter of fact, the debate on that issue at the Conference itself was extremely confused, largely because of the vague and often in-cantatory way in which the I.C. delegates used the term "Fourth International". To pose the question, "Is the Fourth International dead or alive?" full-stop, is simply meaningless. On the one hand, the Fourth International can be regarded as simply the fundamental tenets of Trotskyism, which includes the idea that a world revolutionary party is a necessary pre-requisite to successful socialist revolution. In this minimal sense, the Fourth International is synonymous with Trotskyism and is obviously very much alive. At the other end of the spectrum one can regard the Fourth International as a full-bodied international revolutionary party, whose ultimate validity will not be secure until it has led the working class to power on a world scale. In this sense, the Fourth International is not only dead, but has never existed. Between these two extremes, exists a wide spectrum of organizational forms, and programmatic and theoretical concepts, which can be considered as representing the Fourth International or not, depending upon how one uses that term.

However, it should be clearly stated that the discussion was not really about the definition of the term "Fourth International", or still less about the historical and theoretical continuity of the Trotskyist movement. That was simply a thin rationale to disguise the real issue, which was whether the present International Committee, in which the Socialist Labour League is far and away the most important national section, constitutes the sole organized successor to the Trotskyist movement. That this is the case was indicated by the S.L.L. delegates at the Conference and also in Healy's present letter, particularly the section discussing the relationship between "Robertson's group" and "the International". In fact, the whole business was a crude semantic ploy to identify the S.L.L. leadership with the Fourth International and the Fourth International with Trotskyism, so that any criticism of the leadership of the S.L.L. would appear to be a criticism of Trotskyism.

The assertion in paragraph No. 5, that Voix Ouvrière's opposition to the amendment was based on their "anti-theory" position (another meaningless phrase -- evaluation and organization of thought is a necessary part of the cognitive process) is incorrect. V.O.'s position that the Fourth International is dead seems to stem from a well-documented historical interpretation of the Trotskyist movement, the substance of which is that the main organs of the F.I. have been Pabloite since 1940. One may accept or reject this interpretation, but it does not reflect "anti-theory syndicalism".

Comrade Healy's astute observations of our delegation's behavior at the Conference are not worth commenting upon.

On paragraph No. 10 -- Comrade Robertson did not "im-

PLICITLY adopt a deformed workers' state position on Cuba", he explicitly stated it, although his analysis was quite different from that of Posadas.

On paragraph No. 11 -- The statement that the Spartacist delegation remained silent during criticism of our positions, with the implication that we were unable to answer the trenchant criticisms of our position, is almost the exact opposite of the truth. A speakers' list had been prepared the previous day and no more Spartacists were listed. Comrade Jersawitz attempted to get on the list, was refused permission and finally was allowed permission to speak for five minutes, during which time she carefully explained that we were not supporters of Black Nationalism. This is a good example of the appositeness of Comrade Banda's criticism.

On paragraph No. 13 -- Comrade Robertson did not say "that the Conference had no right to ask him to do something he did not want to do". He said that neither the Conference, nor anyone else, for that matter, had the right to make him say something he didn't believe to be true -- i.e., to apologize for something he did not think was wrong -- although he said, had he known of this rule (a rule which apparently applied to no one else), he would have followed it.

The logical process by which Healy derived from this single statement the conclusion that it "confirmed" (? -- and what is the other evidence?)... "the idealist, pragmatic, petit-bourgeois basis of the Spartacist group." (An organization of over 80 members and a three-year history), is beyond my meager understanding. It should be noted that the S.L.L. is a group which prides itself on its "anti-impressionism".

Paragraph No. 14, on V.O.'s leaving the Conference, is a pack of lies. V.O. did not leave the Conference because the Conference refused to accept their position on the state of the F.I. Nor did they submit any requests that the Conference do so. They left because during the discussion on the subject numerous personal attacks were made upon them; they were called petit-bourgeois enemies of Trotskyism. At one point, Healy claimed that if he had known their real position, he never would have invited them to the Conference. Their criticisms of the main resolution were published a month before the Conference. At this point, it should be emphasized that the statement saying "the Fourth International was dead and had to be rebuilt" was a statement in the main I.C. resolution, the basic document of the Conference and the one on which groups were invited to the Conference and agreed to come. The controversy arose when the I.C. leadership attempted to amend their own major document, with an amendment which said, in effect, "The Fourth International is alive, and We're it".

Paragraph No. 15 dealing with the Spartacist and supposed political differences with the I.C. is interesting. Unless one regards "the International" as a kind of sacred document, which one accepts or rejects en toto, differences between the Spartacist and the majority of the I.C. have nothing to do with the Spartacist's "internationalism", but simply represent differences between two political organizations, which should be resolved by the usual democratic processes, designated for that purpose. It is strange that methods of

settling political differences within the I.C. or the organization of the I.C. in general was one topic not discussed at the Conference. It is even stranger when one considers that, had the unity taken place, the Spartacist and its present leadership would have constituted the majority faction of the second or third largest national section of the I.C., which now has six national sections, three of them very small indeed. To be fair to Healy on this point, it should be noted that he never intended to go through with the unity agreement anyway, so possibly he regarded it as an unimportant point.

Paragraph No. 16 speaks all too eloquently for itself.

Paragraph No. 13 again, Comrade Robertson did not laugh in the face of Comrade Raktos.

In closing, I would again like to remind the comrades that Comrade Healy is a liar.

received  
7 May 1966

Mark Tishman  
Alternate Delegate  
Spartacist League

to the 1966 International  
Committee Conference

19 April 1966

Coordinating Committee,  
American Committee for  
the Fourth International

Dear Comrades,

Two weeks have passed since the spokesman for the Spartacist delegation was expelled from the London Conference. This action was taken upon the initiative of G. Healy of the British Socialist Labour League despite the exhibition by Spartacist of its clear-cut political solidarity with the International Committee even under conditions of extreme provocation. This exclusion of our organization, supported by your delegation, effectively disrupted the projected fusion of our two groups.

As a pre-condition for a responsible outcome to the present situation, we believe that the membership of our two organizations should have the opportunity to hear and compare conference reports by participants in the two delegations.

Therefore we ask for a joint New York membership meeting to be scheduled at the earliest convenient date to hear the delegates and discuss fully and freely the alternatives open before us now.

We also ask that a Spartacist delegate to the IC Conference speak to your Minneapolis local, either along with an ACFI reporter or separately as you wish. If this is acceptable we would readily grant the same privilege to your organization to speak before our San Francisco Bay Area group and in any case would seek to bring our entire East Coast membership into the NYC joint meeting where they could hear and discuss reports on the Conference and resulting situation facing us.

We make these proposals because we continue to believe firmly that a fusion in the U.S. of the principled Leninist type projected in the Montreal agreement remains a political responsibility for genuine Trotskyists.

Fraternally,  
J. Robertson, for the Spartacist  
National Office.

\* \* \*

April 22, 1966

J. Robertson  
Spartacist National Office  
New York, N.Y.

Dear Comrade Robertson,

In reply to your letter of April 19 the Coordinating Committee of the American Committee for the Fourth International states as follows:

The American Committee for the Fourth International concurs completely with the actions of the International Com-

mittee on Spartacist. It is our opinion that your organization has broken politically in an unprincipled manner with the world Trotskyist movement. Since we maintain our political solidarity with the International Committee we view your organization as an opponent organization and must conduct ourselves accordingly. Unification between the two groups is out of the question.

Under such conditions a joint membership meeting along the lines of the one held prior to the IC conference is of course out of the question. Your proposal assumes a relationship between our two groups completely apart from solidarity with the International movement. However, if you wish to organize a formal debate to explain the positions of the two organizations before the memberships in New York this would be acceptable to us.

If we are able to work out debate arrangements in New York City it should be simple to organize similar debates elsewhere. The next issue of the Bulletin will explain our position more fully.

Fraternally,

D. Freeman, for the  
Coordinating Comm.,  
American Comm. for  
the Fourth Int.

\* \* \*

2 May 1966

Coordinating Committee,  
A.C.F.I.

Dear Comrades,

We are in receipt of your letter of 22 April responding to our request for joint membership meetings to hear and discuss the reports of our two delegations to the London Conference.

We regret your absurdly false accusation that we have "broken politically...with the world Trotskyist movement" and your willfully hostile self-characterization as an "opponent organization" to us.

Nonetheless we believe the complete and sudden somersault on reunification of our two groups and the resulting confusion makes it mandatory for us to seek whatever discussion and clarification we can. Therefore we are willing to settle for the formal debate between our groups which you make clear is the only form of oral discussion between us you would accept.

As regards the debate in New York City we propose that it be held on Saturday evening, the 21st of May. Because many of our comrades will drive long distances to attend, a Saturday evening meeting would maximize our participation and avoid compelling comrades to drive all night. We cannot propose an earlier date because the preceding Saturday will be the occasion for mass picketing of the student draft deferment



tests and many of our comrades will be involved. And to set a later date would again cut deeply into the attendance of student comrades because of the scheduling of school final examinations.

In line with the usual practices for such events we propose holding the meeting in a neutral, rented hall with either an agreed, acceptable outside chairman or failing that two chairmen, one from each group, with one presiding over the first half and the other over the second half of the debate. We accept the standard arrangements for formal debates of this sort: that the speaking order be set by the toss of a coin; that floor discussion be held tightly to one round of three minutes each; and that summaries be reversed. We suggest that the speaking times be: presentations by each reporter -- 1½ hours each; summaries -- ½ hour each; that total speaking time for each reporter be held rigidly to within the set amount of time by the chairman, but that small shifts of time between presentation and summary be permitted if desired by the speaker.

We further propose that all other details be explicitly worked out in advance by consultation between our two NYC organizer.

We request that you inform us as soon as possible when it would be convenient for you to schedule a similar debate in the Twin Cities.

Fraternally,  
J. Robertson,  
for the REB.

\* \* \*

May 5, 1966

James Robertson  
Resident Editorial Board  
Spartacist

Dear Comrades,

We are in receipt of your letter dated May 2nd on the matter of a debate between our two organizations over the Third World Congress of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

We are referring this letter, as we have our past correspondence, to the International Committee for its opinion.

As soon as we receive a reply from the IC, we will get in touch with you.

Yours fraternally,  
Daniel Freeman for  
the Coordinating Com-  
mittee, American Com-  
mittee for the Fourth  
International

AFTER THE APRIL 1966 CONFERENCE WHICH TOOK AS ITS TASK

TO RECONSTRUCT THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

By Georges Kaldy

[The following article has been translated from the May 2, 1966 Voix Ouvrière, semimonthly newspaper of a group in France that stands "For the construction of a Revolutionary Workers party." Subheadings appear in the original.]

\* \* \*

Today, as much as in the past, every individual revolutionary and every revolutionary organization feels the cruel lack of a revolutionary international which would be able to analyze the experience of the class struggle on a world scale and establish an organizational and political link between the revolutionary vanguards of the industrialized countries, the underdeveloped countries and the countries ruled by the bureaucracy.

The Fourth International founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938 has been the only international organization whose program was compatible with revolutionary activity, but it was never able to play a leading role in the class struggle. After the death of its founder, the Fourth International ended by foundering on the shoals of petty-bourgeois opportunism and gave birth to what is known today as Pabloism, which amounts to the abandonment of Marxism, both organizationally and politically.

There is no International today even in the formal sense. Four fragments of it survive, each claiming that it alone continues the Fourth International of Trotsky's time.

-- The so-called official Fourth International led by Frank and Germain.

-- The Latin-American Bureau of Posadas.

-- The so-called "Marxist-Revolutionary" tendency of Pablo.

-- And the International Committee.

Until recently, the latter, which bases itself on the 1952 split, was the only one of these groups which demonstrated an entirely relative modesty by not calling itself "The Fourth International." It was this group which recently called an International Conference with the aim of reconstructing the Fourth International. (We have dealt with this conference and our attitude toward it and the groups that called it on several occasions, in nos. 53, 55, 56 and 57 of our paper.)

Our Participation

We decided to take part in this congress. First of all,

we cannot stand aside from any attempt to recreate an international revolutionary organization. And secondly, because we found three positive elements in the draft document of the I.C. and in the attitude of the host organizations:

1. A sharp, definitive critique of Pabloism, of both its organizational and political principles.

2. MOST IMPORTANTLY -- the Fourth International is DEAD and therefore it MUST BE RECONSTRUCTED IN ITS ENTIRETY and there can be no question of simple adherence to any of the existing shops, including that of the I. C., as the document recognized.

3. The I. C. appeared to disavow the antidemocratic organizational concepts of the Fourth International in the years 1943-52.

We proposed to participate on a CRITICAL basis and we made that clear in advance. For we had no political illusions about the organizations that make up the International Committee, either before or after the conference. Their past both in the Fourth International and after the split, has been an aggregate of monumental political mistakes, beginning with their nationalism during the war, and continuing with their analyses of Yugoslavia, of the Peoples Democracies, of China, and more recently of the MNA [Mouvement National Algérien].

Their document itself proved that even in denouncing Pabloism, they could not rid themselves of the Pabloist methods of analysis. We made all these criticisms prior to the conference. We said that the most serious fault in their document was that although they condemned Pabloism vigorously, they were unable to explain HOW and WHY it appeared and how to fight against the causes of such a phenomenon.

Nevertheless, we participated in the conference, because, even if its organizers were unable to analyse the causes of Pabloism, in breaking with Pabloism and in stating that the International no longer exists, the I. C. had laid the necessary foundations for such an analysis. From there a serious discussion on the causes of the failure of the Fourth International, and thus on the methods by which to reconstruct it, could be initiated.

In contrast to the other fragments who content themselves with a fictitious International (or Internationals), which exists only in their own minds, and to which they can give no reality, and with which they are perfectly content, one group originating in the International had the courage to half-open its eyes to the sad reality. To be sure, that was very little, all the more since they were men who, in the face of the enormity of the task, might well quickly close their eyes again and return to their ever so much more comforting and, above all, more convenient illusions.

It was very little but it was a chance that had to be taken.

#### Obvious Lack of Seriousness

Unfortunately, our expectations were confirmed during

the conference, as our predictions in 1943 have been confirmed with the elapse of time.

We found ourselves confronted with organizations which were incapable of discussing the real problems, the methods and the tasks of the construction of a world revolutionary organization. We found people who made a pretense of analysis by playing with words. We were confronted with people who, instead of making an attempt to explain the reason for the failure of the International spent their time in congratulating themselves on the past, which, as one of them said, "gives us no cause to blush."

We certainly did not go there to make anyone blush and, certainly, we had no idea that we could do it. But, all things considered, if thirty years after its founding, the International does not exist otherwise than in the program left by Trotsky; if the balance sheet of the organizations that make up the Fourth International comes to nothing or almost nothing, after twenty years; if the Trotskyist organizations have never been able to compete for the leadership of the proletariat with the reformist and Stalinist machines, anywhere or at any time; isn't there some reason for it?

Did we go there to discuss, or to learn what would make each other blush?

We were confronted with people whose internationalism scarcely went beyond the limits of the conference hall. Not that declarations and speeches were lacking! But it would seem that a necessary, if not sufficient precondition for engaging in an international discussion with other groups would be a knowledge of their political positions.

But there were leading delegates there who meted out their advice and their thunderbolts, with an admirable self-sufficiency, to groups of which they knew nothing at all except that they existed!

Thus the major speaker for the principal host organization stated on the third day of the conference that he had learned with amazement about our position on China only that morning and by chance!

Let us leave aside the fact that it could amaze a Trotskyist to define as bourgeois a state which was established without the participation of the proletariat and in opposition to it. We must bless the happy chance that gave the comrade in question the opportunity to learn of our position on a vital question.

We might note, all the same, that there are many other ways besides happy chance through which an international leader can learn the position of a group which he proposes to advise, one of them being through reading their press!

Is this just an anecdote?

Yes, but it reveals the lack of seriousness with which they dealt with questions which were serious.

## Reconstruct or Rebuild?

In this conference where the length of the speeches could scarcely make up for the emptiness of the remarks, we were treated like troublemakers when we tried to initiate discussion on the real problems. Indeed, there was no discussion. Just like the International in 1943, its present day fragment refused discussion, and in a way which was quite characteristic.

If, in taking the floor, we did not convince the I.C., at least they got a better understanding of their own draft document. They came to understand what we hoped they had understood -- namely; that stating that the Fourth International no longer exists carries with it the obligation to analyze the causes for its failure. They understood, in a word, that what they had written contained the kernel of our criticism and implied our analysis.

But we can only believe that they are incapable of making this analysis. In fact, in the very middle of the conference, rather than undertake this analysis, they chose to revise their own document! By means of an amendment added to a secondary phrase, they completely changed the spirit of their own draft resolution. Here is the original phrase:

"Petty-bourgeois opportunism, in the shape of a hardened revisionist tendency penetrating all sections of the Trotskyist movement, has destroyed the Fourth International as an organization founded on the Transitional Programme and now necessitates a complete break from the theoretical, political and organisational methods of the revisionists."

The amendment proposed to modify this sentence by beginning with:

"The Fourth International defended itself against and won a victory over petty-bourgeois opportunism which...etc."

While the original edition said that the International had been destroyed, according to the amendment the same International was not only very much alive but had won a victory!

We had to tell them that if this amendment was voted, the ENTIRE meaning of the document would be changed, including the conclusion where it says:

"The Fourth International founded by Leon Trotsky no longer exists," and including the title which speaks of the "reconstruction of the Fourth International."

It is true that one of the zealous supporters of the amendment, the editor of La Verité, realized that it was hardly logical to speak of the reconstruction of something that had never been destroyed. With a fine eye for delicate shades of meaning, he proposed to replace the word, "reconstruct," now considered to be inadequate, with the word, "rebuild" [rebâtir].

We were not the only ones to lose our way in these subtleties. The translator -- no pun intended -- also got lost. Although up to then he had translated the French word, "re-

construction," with the English word, "rebuilding," he now resolved the difficulty brilliantly by translating the word "rebâtir" [rebuild] with the Gallicism, "reconstruction."

At a congress which had been called originally to discuss the task of the RECONSTRUCTION of the International, we learned that this International had not been destroyed, and that thanks to the I.C. the continuity of the International had been safeguarded!

And what is more, before continuing, or more exactly, really beginning the discussion, it was demanded that we vote on a document according to which the Fourth International continues to exist and that it is none other than the International Committee. Naturally, we refused. And since our participation in the conference had lost its point, we left the hall.

It is easy to offer quotations where those who identified the Fourth International with the International Committee during the conference, developed a diametrically opposite idea.

The draft resolution itself from beginning to end dealt with the question of an International which had been "destroyed" or no longer existed, etc.

We will add some quotations from the preparatory documents of the French section:

The pamphlet published by La Verité on this subject (p. 4) referred to the destruction of the Fourth International "as a coherent political whole." In the French preparatory document, it is stated that "the development of the class struggle has confirmed the program of the Fourth International but it has DESTROYED the International."

Elsewhere, one reads:

"The I.C. is NOT the Fourth International....," etc.

We could quote more abundantly; there is quite a choice. But we know that a few contradictions will not bother the I.C. No doubt, they will even find a way of claiming that there is no contradiction there and that the terms, the destroyed International and the living International, which is identified with the I.C., mean the same thing. No doubt, they will add also that anyone who doesn't understand this understands nothing about dialectics!

We will be delighted to read in the next number of La Verité how these comrades explain the positions they took in the I.C., in view of what they wrote in the two previous issues of La Verité.

Unless they think (as is their habit) that their readers deserve no explanation for the change in their political attitude.

Lenin said that you can't trap an opportunist with quotations. And we don't want to trap the I.C. in this way.

We know the organizations of the I.C. too well to be surprised at the ease with which they tear up the evening's documents the following morning.

Nonetheless, it must be said that they made a choice when they voted for the amendment. The former draft resolution contained an ambiguity which our remarks brought into the open.

### The Pabloist Continuity

Anyone who says that the International has been destroyed must analyze the causes of its destruction; this, however, would force the I.C. to submit its own past to a severe and painful criticism. The I.C. has chosen the second path. Since it is incapable of analyzing the reason for this failure, it ended by denying that there was a failure.

The decision made by the I.C. is more than erroneous. It proves in reality the inability of the organizations which compose it to analyze and criticize the political and organizational methods which were at the origin of Pabloism and consequently their inability to break with it. It proves that the causes that engendered Pabloism in the majority of the International mortally infected the minority which broke, formally, with Pabloism.

We will not make a point of our numerical size with respect to the La Verité group, but it is certainly this incapacity of theirs which causes them to vegetate and to fail to develop, whereas in 1945 they had an organization that was able to get some tens of thousands of votes in the elections.

The decision made by the I.C. also proves that this organization, like the other fragments of the International contents itself in reality with illusions and grandiloquent phrases, and that it refuses even to discuss with those willing to seriously take up the task at hand.

### The Incapacity of the I.C.

We left the conference with no regrets. But in leaving it, we did not break with the organizations in the International Committee. We break definitively with no one.

On the contrary, we will show these comrades that if they follow the same path they followed during and after the war, if they use the same methods, if they hold to the same attitudes, if they pursue the same policies; they will give up any chance of participating in building a real International which would play a leading role in the class struggle.

They would have their international conferences, perhaps. Their so-called "International," so quickly reconstructed in two days, would doubtless grow from conference to conference, at least in words; in the same way that this meeting called to construct the International was transformed on the second day into the third conference of the International Committee.

And since reality will not yield to their desires, they will brush reality aside.

During our stay, we read an article in a recent issue of the Newsletter, the weekly paper of the English section of the I.C., devoted to the student strike against the Fouchet reform.

We read the following report: "Led by Trotskyists, 70 percent of the 23,000 students (from the Faculty of Law) went on strike on Wednesday [Thursday?], March 17." There was something to pick up the morale of the English comrades. It is too bad that these 16,000 law students led by the Trotskyists exist only in the pages of the Newsletter, and not in the Faculty of Law in Paris!

Doubtless, they think that by brushing reality aside this will make their International stronger every day. But a revolutionary organization cannot be built on bluff. And you can't build it with people who are satisfied with bluff.

It is not sufficient to proclaim yourself to be an heir of Trotsky to immediately achieve the stature of a great revolutionary.

Before any group proclaims itself to be an International in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky, it must prove that it has the right to do that and prove it politically. If Trotsky's writings educated an entire generation of militants, the same cannot be said for the stack of theses, documents, resolutions, proclamations and speeches published since 1945 by the organizations that call themselves the Fourth International. Furthermore, even for them, these documents are useless, if not superfluous and embarrassing. In any case they appear to pay little attention to them.

The I.C. can entertain illusions about itself, but other organizations are taken in much less than they think.

We know that the I.C., as such, is incapable of leading the necessary work of reconstructing the Fourth International. We have no confidence in the International Committee.

But we have great confidence in the Trotskyist movement.

#### For a Genuine New Course

We make no claim that we will reconstruct the International. But we know that it will be reconstructed and that we will have a role to play in this work.

We will play our role, and it is up to the I.C. to choose whether it will play a positive or merely an ineffectual role. It is beyond its strength to play a negative one.

We went to the conference to begin discussion on the tasks of reconstructing the Fourth International. Those that we found there were not ready to engage in this discussion. But it is our custom to do what we say we will do. Therefore, we will pursue this discussion, outside of the framework set by the I.C. certainly, but we will pursue it because it is vital for the future of the revolutionary movement.

Furthermore, we are certain to find favorable echoes



inside the organizations of the I.C. themselves.

Because superficial unity based on documents which mean nothing and can bind no one since they can be disavowed three days later, shouldn't fool anyone. Quite a few members of the delegations represented at the congress were not far from sharing our opinion on the nature of the tasks to be undertaken in order to do something else than reenact for the nth time the same play which has already proved a fiasco a number of times.

What we want, what we are fighting for, is that the Trotskyist organizations which exist nearly everywhere in the world should take on this task, without hiding their weaknesses, without bluffing, without disrespect for their own ideas or for the ideas of others. We know that much effort and many struggles are necessary before an international revolutionary organization can be brought into being. But the effort required does not frighten us nor the distance which separates us from the goal.

And we will not abandon tomorrow's reality for today's illusions.

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