

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

March 30, 1973

To the United Secretariat of the Fourth International

Dear Comrades,

On May 11, 1971 the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party sent a letter to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International voicing our concern over a lengthy letter dated November 24, 1970, written by Comrade Livio Maitan under the pen name of "Domingo." The letter came to our attention accidentally when it was circulated in Latin America in mimeographed form. The Domingo letter had not been written in consultation with the United Secretariat; it had not been made available to United Secretariat members; it had been sent without the knowledge of the United Secretariat; yet it dealt with grave problems of the Fourth International, particularly the problems of the Argentine section, in a way calculated to crystallize opinion along factional lines.

In response to our protest, the majority of the United Secretariat held that the Domingo letter was a private matter. Its content, according to this view, did not go beyond the normal limits of a personal communication.

In our opinion, which was expressed in a letter to the United Secretariat dated July 7, 1971, the fact that the majority of the United Secretariat could consider such a communication by one of its own members as a private matter raised a number of very grave questions. The position adopted by the majority of the United Secretariat opened the way to such abuses of authority as operating behind the back of the United Secretariat and behind the back of the leaderships of sections. It could only encourage the formation of cliques and similar unhealthy groupings put together in secret by individual members of the United Secretariat.

All this material was submitted to the International Information Bulletin in June and July of 1971 (No. 4 and No. 5.). (Reprinted in International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Discussion on Latin America, 1969-1972.)

We have now been apprised of a new and even more serious violation of the traditional procedures of our movement in this respect.

On March 6, 1973, our national office received from Comrade Ernest a copy of a lengthy political letter addressed to the comrades of the Argentine PRT (Combatiente). This letter, signed by six members of the United Secretariat -- Alain, Ernest, Livio, Pierre, Sandor, and Tariq -- was dated October 31, 1972. In an accompanying note dated March 1, 1973, Comrade Ernest asked that it be included in a forthcoming issue of the English-language edition of the International Internal Discussion Bulletin.

This Letter of the Six, which is now more than four months old, was never made available to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. It was sent to the PRT (Combatiente) without the knowledge of the United Secretariat. A Spanish version is at the moment being circulated in mimeographed form throughout Latin America without the knowledge of the United Secretariat as a whole. Members of the United Secretariat, who had never before seen the letter, received by accident copies of the Spanish version several days before seeing the copy in French mailed by Comrade Ernest. The Letter of the Six was also kept from the knowledge of the International Executive Committee, a point we will take up below.

We do not challenge the right of members of the United Secretariat to engage in private correspondence with other leaders of the International. However, as with the Domingo Letter, we challenge the procedure of United Secretariat members privately circulating major political documents dealing with questions and problems relevant to the entire world movement. In the case of the Letter of the Six, moreover, it can hardly be argued that it is a "private" letter. It was signed by six members of the United Secretariat who obviously consulted with each other about it.

We should also like to add for the sake of clarity that we do not challenge the right of a faction, formed on a declared platform, to circulate documents within its own ranks. However, this is not what is involved in the Letter of the Six. The six authors did not declare a faction on an open platform in accordance with the principles of our movement -- they have not done so up to this moment. What they did instead was to reach agreement among themselves on the basis of an undeclared platform, undeclared aims, and an undeclared course of action. The proof is that they wrote at least one joint document which they circulated to a sector of the membership without the knowledge of the United Secretariat or the International Executive Committee.

The decision of the six authors to keep the United Secretariat ignorant concerning this letter -- whether for a short time or for four months -- means one thing and one thing only: that a certain group of leading comrades is working behind the back of the elected leadership of the International, both the United Secretariat and the International Executive Committee.

We do not intend to deal with the content of the Letter of the Six at this time. Like the Domingo Letter it includes a tendentious factional attack on the comrades of the sympathizing section of the Fourth International in Argentina, the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST). The attack includes false assertions and distortions of the positions of the PST. The letter also contains a detailed political analysis of the course of the PRT (Combatiente) and firmly stated advice to the leadership of that party. We leave aside our disagreement with the political content of the letter in order to focus on the fundamental issue involving the norms of democratic centralism which is at stake.

The Letter of the Six was written more than one month prior to the meeting of the International Executive Committee, which took place the first week in December 1972. The central points on the agenda for that extremely important gathering of the elected leadership of the Fourth International were Bolivia and Argentina. The purpose of the gathering was to prepare resolutions on these points in particular as part of the preparations for the next world congress. A document such as the Letter of the Six should obviously have been included as part of the material to be discussed at the IEC. It would certainly have had a bearing on the decisions reached there and could have influenced the votes of those present. Had the IEC members known of the existence of this letter we are confident they would have demanded to see it and to include it in the discussion. Thus by withholding their letter of October 31 from the IEC as well as the United Secretariat, the six members of the United Secretariat blocked the top leadership of the Fourth International from considering it and discussing it in the period when key resolutions and other documents were being drawn up.

This is all the more disturbing in light of the special declaration made by Comrade Sandor which was read into the IEC minutes.

"But the comrades who voted for the Latin American resolution at the Ninth World Congress," he said, "committed an error in not opening up a fraternal discussion sooner in our movement on the ideological positions of the Argentine section, in particular, on Maoism, the military intervention in Czechoslovakia, and the road toward building a mass revolutionary International, positions with which they are in complete disagreement. These comrades hereby make a self-criticism in this regard and promise to begin a discussion on these questions with the Argentine comrades and throughout the International, in the context of preparing for the Tenth World Congress."

In other words, Comrade Sandor, one of the authors of the Letter of the Six, did not see fit to inform the elected body to which he and the other authors are responsible that they had already begun such a discussion. The other five likewise remained silent. It is clear that this silence was the result of a common decision. In violation of the norms of a democratic international discussion preparatory to the coming world congress, both the United Secretariat and the International Executive Committee were kept in the dark about the existence of this document and its common authorship by six leaders of the International.

Comrade Ernest's letter of March 1 states, "Enclosed you'll find the text of the letter which a certain number of members of the United Secretariat sent to the PRT, prior to the last IEC. Please reproduce this letter in an International Internal Bulletin in English. This was formally decided at the January 1973 United Secretariat meeting."

The minutes for the January United Secretariat meeting, which Comrade Ernest himself drafted, do not list the Letter

of the Six as having been submitted there.

The minutes read:

"5d) New articles submitted to the International Discussion: Germain article; Thérèse answer to European perspectives document; Pi-lan article in answer to Waag; Draft resolution by United Secretariat majority submitted to World Congress. Agreed to include these articles in the International Internal Bulletin."

Comrade Pedro who was the only member of our leadership able to attend that meeting (which coincided with the massive January 20 march on Washington against Nixon's new bombing escalation against the Vietnamese) reported that the existence of a document called the "Letter of the Six" was mentioned at the Secretariat. It was not submitted to the International Internal Discussion Bulletin, however, nor were copies made available to members of the United Secretariat. That was already close to three months after the letter had been sent to Argentina.

The Letter of the Six was not mentioned at the February United Secretariat meeting nor was it submitted to the International Internal Discussion Bulletin at that meeting either.

The Letter of the Six was referred to by Comrade Ernest Germain in his article "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International." In the section dealing with his differences with the PRT (Combatiente) he says the following: "Nevertheless it must be said that the United Secretariat has made a serious mistake in not opening a frank discussion with the comrades of the Argentine section much earlier than on the eve of the last IEC. This discussion has now started with the letter signed by some members of the United Secretariat and sent to the leadership of the PRT before the last IEC." (Page 18 of the English-language edition.)

When we read Comrade Germain's article, after it reached us following the February United Secretariat meeting, this reference puzzled us. It was inaccurate to imply that the United Secretariat as a whole had made a mistake in not opening up a discussion with the PRT (Combatiente), inasmuch as some members of the United Secretariat had opposed adoption of the guerrilla line at the last world congress and in various documents had argued against it since then and against the guerrilla course followed by the PRT (Combatiente). On the other hand, if the United Secretariat as a whole decided to open a discussion with the leadership of the PRT (Combatiente) on the basis of a critical appraisal of their errors, why had only "some members of the United Secretariat" collaborated on a letter to them? Why didn't all of the members of the United Secretariat vote for it? Were there differences over the letter? What were the differences? Above all, what was the content of this letter, so important that Comrade Germain appeared to view it as one of the founding documents of his tendency?

The mystery is now cleared up. The Letter of the Six was kept from the knowledge of the United Secretariat and the International Executive Committee!

In our opinion, the foregoing facts show that six members of the United Secretariat have operated as a secret faction for at least five months behind the back of the United Secretariat and the International Executive Committee -- the elected leadership bodies of the International.

This development raises grave doubts about the ability of the elected leadership bodies to organize a fully democratic discussion leading to an authoritative world congress, for it is now revealed that the majority of the United Secretariat had circulated at least one very important document to part of the membership of the Fourth International while keeping another part of the membership in ignorance of its existence. There can be no democratic discussion when documents are circulated to some members and not to others; when a secret, undeclared faction gives an arbitrarily selected group access to documents which it refrains from making available to others -- until the time is ripe, or the existence of the document is accidentally revealed as in the case of the Domingo Letter.

Serious doubt has even been placed on the capacity of the United Secretariat to continue functioning in a normal way, for the question inevitably arises: are other documents of the importance of the Letter of the Six now being circulated by the secret faction in the same surreptitious way to a privileged sector of the membership of the Fourth International? If the six deny that other similar documents are being circulated surreptitiously, what basis exists for believing them? Their probity can no longer be taken for granted. They have succeeded in bringing into question their ability, or their willingness, to abide by the norms of democratic centralism. They have placed the interests of a secret faction above those of the movement as a whole. A most damaging blow has been dealt to confidence in the United Secretariat as a collective body.

We ask that this letter be submitted to the International Internal Discussion Bulletin so that the rank and file of the International can be informed of this extremely grave development.

Comradely,

Political Committee
Socialist Workers Party

cc: International Executive Committee members

(1)

Latin America

Chile - \exists group pro LTT ~ 10 people
includes Blanco, Brazilian exiles
some Chileans
 \exists perhaps 50 in the section

Peru - ~ 60 eds in section
industrial work
universities
+ recently in high schools
 \exists newspaper, but not too
regular || 2,000 copies

Mexico - 60-100 in official section
50 in gp with LT

PST - \exists contact with Cubans in
Argentina + Paraguayans

Brazil

(2)

Uruguay - ~~---~~ ~ 90 ideas

~~many~~ workers fractions
expect to recruit ~ 40 SKs
soon

+ 150 contacts

500 copies of mimeographed
weekly paper

~~-----~~ were active in recent general
strike

Argentina -

when Lorenzo left
PST had decided to run Corral
& Pieg

whether or not to run - depended
on law - said 3% of vote
required to win - otherwise
loss of legality // if you ran in
two consecutive elections

(
PST =

NYT report that Tocco will join
the slate -
he is one of the most well-known
labor leaders in Argentina vs Kucsi

(3)

he is a left wing bureaucrat - but
representative of post-1969 - when
upurge -

[illegible]

[illegible]

the (17) (21) points of tendency
(what is a tendency) discussed at
Santiago -

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April 17, 1973

Dear Jack,

Enclosed you'll find the answer of the United Secretariat to the PC's letter of March 30. It will be sent from Paris to all IEC members. Please send it to all PC and NC members, as well as to all those comrades of the PST who received the March 30 letter.

Comradely,

s/Walter

To the Political Committee of the S.W.P. April 10, 1973

Dear Comrades,

On the eve of the April session of the United Secretariat, we, as well as all members of the IEC, received your letter dated March 30, 1973, which makes grave accusations against six members of our body. The subject of these accusations is a letter signed by these six comrades (Alain, Ernest, Livio, Pierre, Sandor, Tariq) and addressed to the Argentine section of the Fourth International, the P.R.T. (Combatiente). The United Secretariat decided that an answer to this letter should be sent in the name of that body. This is our answer.

As all comrades know, the Socialist Workers Party is prevented by reactionary legislation from organizational affiliation to the Fourth International. Thus the word "section" always refers to the relationship of fraternal solidarity that the SWP has with the Fourth International. The word "member" when applied to Socialist Workers Party leaders refers to the fraternal observer status and fraternal consultative vote expressing political opinion that is granted Socialist Workers Party leaders at world congresses, International Executive Committee plenums, and United Secretariat meetings of the Fourth International.

It is necessary first of all to set the record straight as to the actual facts. Although the letter addressed to the PRT is dated October 31, 1972, it could not be sent to the Argentine section because of lack of any address, owing to the repression of which that section is victim. The letter was actually transmitted only on December 15, 1972, to the PRT delegate to the IEC, at the time when he returned home.

At the January 20, 1973, meeting of the United Secretariat, that body was informed about the mailing of the letter, as your March 30 communication admits itself. The comrades of the minority were promised a copy of the letter the next day in Paris, because no copy was present at the place where the Secretariat meeting was held. The next day it appeared that no copy was present in Paris either, and that it was necessary to request a copy from comrade Livio. This was received and transmitted to the minority comrades by mail, because for four months after the I.E.C., there has been no resident minority comrade at the Bureau.

From this simple statement of facts, it appears immediately that the only cause for "scandal" would be the one month -- and not four months -- delay between the actual transmission of the document to the PRT on December 15, and the information given to the United Secretariat on January 20.

What was the reason for this short delay?

Obviously, the letter transmitted to the PRT by six members of the United Secretariat, far from being a "secret" letter, was a political criticism of the line of the Argentine section by comrades who had, till that moment, not yet expressed such systematic criticism. Obviously, this letter was intended to be published as widely as possible in the Internal Bulletins of the International. For anybody who reads that letter, this purpose appears evident. Under these circumstances, the signatories of the letter considered it an act of elementary courtesy towards the leadership of the Argentine section, which they strongly criticized, to give it a normal interval of time in which it could read the letter and, if necessary, reply to it, before it was made public inside the world movement. We did not want to place these comrades before an accomplished fact in the

IVth International, because we wanted to discuss with them, not to excommunicate them.

It so happened that the letter to the PRT was immediately translated into Spanish, mimeographed and widely distributed throughout the Latin-American movement, by an oppositional grouping inside the PRT, which had received it through the same comrade who had brought it back from the IEC session. This publication, which undid the very purpose of the delay desired by the signatories of the letter before it should be made public inside the world movement, was evidently not caused or asked for or approved by the six authors of that letter. They have or had no interest whatsoever to "restrict" the circulation of such a document to a particular sector of the world movement.

Had the members of the Political Committee of the SWP wanted to learn what really happened, they could have easily acquired the necessary information from the authors of the document. No reason for complaint would have been found to exist. Even from a very formal point of view, the necessary information about the existence and the mailing of the letter, and its proposed inclusion in the I.I.B., occurred at the first United Secretariat meeting after the transmission of the letter to the PRT.

But instead of simply requesting (and receiving) the information relative to that letter, the Political Committee of the SWP saw fit to blow this trivial matter up into an "incident" and a "scandal" of "principled" magnitude, and to launch grave accusations, including "violation of democratic centralism", against leading members of the Fourth International, accusations even expressed in abusive language. This makes it unavoidable for the United Secretariat to strongly repudiate these unfounded accusations, and condemn the abusive terms used.

1.- The Political Committee of the SWP states:

"The decision of the six authors to keep the United Secretariat in ignorance concerning this letter -- whether for a short time or for four months - means one thing and one thing only: that a certain group of leading comrades is working behind the back of the elected leadership of the International, both the United Secretariat and the International Executive Committee".

This statement, taken at face value, can mean one thing and one thing only: according to the P.C. of the SWP, any political communication going beyond two individuals, and undertaken by members of international leadership bodies outside the knowledge of others, has to be considered as proof that these members "are working behind the back of the elected leadership of the International."

This is certainly an innovation in the history of bolshevism. It has no basis in any official rule established by any document adopted till now by the world movement. The P.C. of

the SWP has of course the right to propose such a new rule for future consideration of the movement. As for us, it appears unacceptable. There is no principled difference between consultation in writing, or by way of mouth, at informal gatherings, through the telephone etc. To admit the latter and not the former is unjustified discrimination. To exclude them all is a stifling of elementary democratic rights of members.

Indeed, the facts show clearly that members of the SWP who are participating in the international leadership, as well as comrades with whom they are now building an international tendency, have themselves been actively involved in the very same "crimes" which they now consider to be so grievous when they are being "committed" by other members of the international leadership.

Just to refresh the PC's memory, we shall recall a single example. When the Sallustro case occurred, a certain number of members of the international leadership, "working behind the back of the elected leadership of the International", adopted a statement in the PC of the SWP without previously informing or consulting their fellow members of the United Secretariat and the IEC. Many of these fellow members saw the statement for the first time only when it appeared in print in "The Militant". None of them were allowed to participate in the discussion leading to the drafting and the publication of that declaration. They were "kept in ignorance concerning this declaration -- whether for a short time or for four months".

In addition, the Canadian section adopted a similar declaration at the same time. There can be no doubt that the Canadian members of the United Secretariat and the IEC consulted on that matter with the SWP comrades, wither in person, or through the telephone, or in writing, and that, according to the criterium used in the SWP's PC letter of March 30, they were thus guilty of the "conspiracy" to "act behind the back of the elected leadership of the International".

2.- The PC of the SWP writes:

"We should also like to add for the sake of clarity that we do not challenge the right of a faction, formed on a declared platform, to circulate documents within its own ranks. However, this is not what is involved in the Letter of the Six. The six members did not declare a faction on an open platform in accordance with the principles of our movement -- they have not done so up to this moment. What they did instead was to reach agreement among themselves on the basis of undeclared platform, undeclared aims, and an undeclared course of action. The proof is that they wrote at least one joint document which they circulated to a sector of the membership without the knowledge of the United Secretariat or the International Executive Committee".

The last part of the last sentence is completely "unproven". As stated before, the Six did not and had no interest to "circulate a joint document to a sector of the membership without

the knowledge of the United Secretariat or the International Executive Committee".

This sentence only takes on any meaning if by "circulating" is understood "consulting" a certain number of comrades before the document is communicated to the whole membership. We should then like to remind the members of the PC of the SWP that the drafting of their declaration and the declaration of the Canadian section on the Sallustro affair also implied obviously mutual consultation among some members of the United Secretariat and the IEC, from which other members of these leading bodies as well as the whole membership of the F.I., had been "arbitrarily excluded". This occurred at a time when the members of the PC of the SWP "did not declare a faction on an open platform", but apparently had "reached agreement among themselves on the basis of an undeclared platform, undeclared aims, and an undeclared course of action. The proof is that they wrote at least one joint document...".

Why didn't we raise that "accusation" at that time? Why didn't we accuse the members of the United Secretariat and of the IEC who are members of the PC of the SWP of having "constituted a secret faction" on an "undeclared platform"? Because the accusation would have been preposterous -- as is the same accusation launched to-day by the PC of the SWP against comrades Alain, Ernest, Livio, Pierre, Sandor and Tariq.

What is involved here is the process of formation of a tendency, and not the operation of a "secret faction". Obviously, for a tendency to be in the process of being formed, it is necessary that it does not already exist prior to this process. Therefore, no "open platform" and "declared aims" of such non-existent tendency can yet be discovered. But growing political differences already manifest themselves. A certain number of comrades already vote repeatedly in the same way in leadership bodies, as against other comrades who vote in the opposite way. How if they refrained from having consultations among themselves? How could such a platform come into existence without some comrades starting to write it together -- "with the exclusion of other comrades"? To call this process the "operation of a secret faction" is ridiculous, and starts to question the basic democratic right of members of the F.I. to create a political tendency on the basis of free consultation and political discussion among themselves.

As a matter of fact, less time elapsed between the drafting of the Letter to the PRT and the call for the constitution of a tendency by the signatories of that letter, in association with other comrades, at the December 1972 IEC session, than between the moment when comrades Joe, Peter, Moreno, Lorenzo and Hugo started to discuss and circulate among them ("behind the back of the leadership bodies of the F.I.") the first drafts of "Argentina and Bolivia -- a balance-sheet", which was finally submitted to the leading bodies of the International only 4-5 months later.

We do not challenge that procedure, because it is impossible to create tendencies otherwise. But what is an admitted right

for some must be an admitted right for all. If the P.C. of the SWP does not think that its members have violated democratic centralism by the way in which they came to draft the resolution on the Sallustro affair or the document "Argentina and Bolivia -- a balance-sheet", then it should cease and desist from accusing other members of the international leadership of having committed such "violations".

We are not ready to accept the argument that such procedure is permissible for members of the international leadership who are also members of leadership bodies of a single national section or sympathizing organization, but that it is impermissible procedure for those comrades who, while being members of the international leadership, happen to be members of leadership bodies of various national sections or sympathizing organizations. In the first place we reject any federalist concept of the International, and therefore consider that members of international leadership bodies have their prime responsibility towards these bodies. In the second place, such a distinction would introduce an impermissible element of discrimination among comrades, giving privileges to some which are denied to others, which is in contradiction with the fundamental equality of rights of all members of the F.I. and its sympathizing organizations.

3. Let us add that in the process of building the tendency for which 19 members of the IEC launched an official call in December 1972, the letter to the PRT leadership was all the more called for, as it was necessary to establish first of all whether there existed basic political differences between the PRT leadership and the comrades engaged in the preparation of building that tendency. This could not be done without some form of consultation. Oral consultation was impossible for reasons of repression. Only written consultation was open to them. It was therefore entirely within the rights of these comrades building a tendency to have such a consultation, prior to making that document known to the whole world movement.

Late September 1972 we received issue nr. 8/9 of "Revista de America". In this is published a letter of comrade Moreno to a Brazilian comrade, dated July 1, 1972. It was written and mailed nearly three months before we received it - in publicly printed form! The letter is addressed to a comrade who seems to be the leader of a Brazilian group which has not yet even formally requested to be recognized as a sympathizing organization of the F.I. It deals with all kinds of political problems around Bolivia, implying strong criticism of the Bolivian section. It is not the only letter dealing with problems debated in the F.I. which comrade Moreno has exchanged with Brazilian comrades. No file of that correspondence has even been handed over to the United Secretariat of the F.I. Bilateral communications between comrade Moreno's group and this Brazilian group, a Uruguayan group, and certainly comrades in other Latin-American countries, have been going on for years, without the leading bodies of the International receiving a single scrap of paper, - till they saw the July 1, 1972 letter in public print. At that moment, comrade Moreno had not declared a public ideological tendency. Had he then been acting for many years

as a "secret faction", "with an undeclared platform and undeclared aims"?

4.- The comrades of the PC of the SWP write:

"In our opinion, the foregoing facts show that six members of the United Secretariat have operated as a secret faction for at least six months behind the back of the United Secretariat.... This development raises grave doubts about the ability of the elected leadership bodies to organize a fully democratic discussion leading to an authoritative world congress.... Serious doubts have even been placed on the capacity of the United Secretariat to continue functioning in a normal way.... If the six deny that other similar documents are being circulated surreptitiously, what basis exists for believing them? Their probity can no longer be taken for granted. They have succeeded in bringing into question their ability, or their willingness, to abide by the norm of democratic centralism".

These wild and abusive accusations -- even calling into question the "probity" of comrades, just because the copy of a letter obviously intended to be published in the widest possible way inside the International was mislaid in Paris at the end of January; raising "violations" of "norms" of democratic centralism not contained in any official document of the F.I. -- can only have one consequence: to poison the minds of those who receive them and read them against the six comrades accused; to prevent the leading cadres of the SWP and their allies to seriously weigh the political arguments of comrades; to cast doubt, in advance, upon the "authoritativeness" of a world congress where they fear to be in minority, after the longest and most democratic discussion ever known in the world Trotskyist movement.

In sending such a letter, without the slightest material basis, without prior examination of facts which could easily have been ascertained, and in complete conflict with elementary logic (for what reason would the Six want to "keep secret" a political differentiation with the PRT which, as the PC of the SWP itself notices, was already publicly announced at the IEC?), the comrades of the PC of the SWP have succeeded in striking a serious blow against a free, open and democratic pre-congress discussion, which can only take place on a political basis, around political documents and platforms, and not with the aid of manufactured "scandals", blown-up "incidents", and personal attacks on the probity of leading comrades, as those launched in the March 30 letter. We call upon all members of the IEC and all members of the NC of the SWP not to follow this bad example, and to keep the discussion on a strictly political basis.

Adopted by a majority vote of the United Secretariat:
For: 9 -- Delfin, Ghulam, Livio, Pierre, Riel, Sandor, Stern,
Vergeat, Walter.
Against: 6 -- Abel, Adair, Hans, Juan, Pedro, Thérèse.