

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
September 22, 1976

To the Coordinators of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction

Dear Comrades,

For your information, enclosed you will find:

1. A report of the July 3-4, 1976, meeting of the United Secretariat by Comrade Johnson.
2. Attachments to the report.
3. A report on the convention of the Communist League of India by Betsey Stone.
4. Correspondence between the Liga Operaria of Brazil and two comrades in Canada.
5. A letter from the Liga Operaria of Brazil to the leadership of the Fourth International explaining why they are withdrawing from the LTF.
6. A reply by the PRT of Portugal to the appeal of the comrades who were expelled in January 1976, and a letter by some of the same comrades to the LCI requesting to join the LCI.
7. A letter from a Chilean comrade to the Socialist Workers Party.

Also included are the three motions to the August 3, 1976, meeting of the United Secretariat concerning the ban by the Political Bureau of the French LCR on LCR members attending the SWP convention. At the LCR Central Committee meeting of August 26-30 a motion was adopted which, although upholding the Political Bureau's decision not to send an official LCR representative to the SWP convention, said that "it would have been possible to allow LCR members who were in the USA to attend the convention as individual observers."

Comradely,

John Benson

REPORT ON JULY 3-4, 1976, MEETING OF THE
UNITED SECRETARIAT

by Johnson

The most important items discussed at the July 3-4, 1976, meeting of the United Secretariat were the Portuguese, Mexican and Italian elections. The enclosed motions, along with articles which have appeared in Inprecor and Intercontinental Press, make the positions quite clear. (See Attachments D and E.)

The other major question at the meeting was what should be the correct response to the overtures for discussion that have been made by other currents within the world Trotskyist movement, especially the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International. Related to this was the invitation by the SWP of the United States to the OCRFI and other organizations to attend its convention. Again, the motions and statements are clear. (The material concerning this question is in the SWP Internal Information Bulletin No. 9 in 1976 and the SWP letter to the United Secretariat is contained in Attachment B).

This same problem also arose around a proposed reply to a letter from the international current Lutte Ouvriere, Spark, Combat Ouvrier and the African Union of Internationalist Communist Workers. The proposed letter was adopted by a majority vote. The members of the LTF on the Secretariat opposed the draft and instead favored a response that welcomed their approach and pointed toward serious political discussion. The Secretariat did agree to propose a discussion between a delegation from the United Secretariat and a delegation from the four organizations. (See Attachment C for the correspondence. Earlier correspondence was in the April 21, 1976 mailing.)

There was a brief discussion on organizational problems in Portugal. Prior to the USec meeting we had learned that the LCI had suffered a split of a large minority, so we requested a report on this. No report was given because Comrade Aubin was not present at the meeting. We further learned that this split had taken place before the May Secretariat meeting. Comrade Aubin had been present at the May meeting. At that meeting he included in his report on Portugal a criticism of the comrades who had been expelled from the PRT in January for forming a "third group." Yet, he failed to mention the split in the LCI. Also, a letter which the May meeting had decided to send to the PRT requesting information on the expulsions was never sent. We requested that a future meeting have a full discussion on the problems that the comrades in Portugal are facing and that representatives of the organizations in Portugal be invited to that meeting. The majority adopted a motion more restrictive in scope.

The discussion around the preparations for the world congress revealed some real problems concerning the ability to prepare a democratic and authoritative congress if it is held in the Spring of 1977 as scheduled. The attached motion was adopted unanimously. (See Attachment A.) However, all it does is adopt a set of guidelines for a discussion that does not yet exist.

The February International Executive Committee meeting adopted a limitation on the total number of pages for the discussion. This motion merely states that there will be no restrictions on the discussion as long as there is no danger that this number of pages is not exceeded. The guidelines do establish that the entire discussion must appear in English, French and Spanish. However, it does not resolve a number of serious problems. First is the speed of translation and distribution in French. There is already a backlog. For example, the Foley, Hansen and Novack reply to the first Frank, Maitan and Mandel article on Portugal printed in Intercontinental Press, has not yet appeared in French although this was agreed to in November 1975.

Secondly, a number of limitations the IMT favors are not settled by this resolution. For example, a proposal urging that the key documents from the Ninth and Ten World Congress discussions be made available was deleted from the guidelines by the IMT.

Since at least half the membership of the international has joined since the last world congress, and since much of the current debates include reference to the past discussion, there can be little real discussion for these comrades unless these documents are available.

And finally, it does not even begin to deal with the main problem; that the IMT has rejected, or postponed publication of, every contribution except two submitted this year. If documents are not made available to comrades at the time they are submitted, and with sufficient time for study before the oral discussion begins, there can be no democratic discussion.

A final problem that arose at the meeting was the functioning of the United Secretariat and the Bureau. Four decisions made at the May meeting were not carried out for the July meeting.

First was the failure to send the letter to the PRT of Portugal. Second, the Bureau failed to send a letter to the Liga Socialista (Tendencia Militante) on its electoral bloc with the Communist Party. Third, it failed to send a letter to the sympathizing organizations in Colombia encouraging them to seek ways of working with several centrist organizations that are being attracted to Trotskyism. And, fourthly, it failed to send copies of the reply to Lutte Ouvriere to all United Secretariat members, to prepare for the July Secretariat meeting. This is another problem we will have to try to overcome in the future.

* * * *

ATTACHMENT A.

Initial guidelines for the pre-world congress discussion

1. The entire pre-world congress discussion is to be published in English, French and Spanish. The United Secretariat shall undertake whatever steps are necessary to achieve this. In other languages, if it is not possible to translate or publish the entire discussion, priority shall be placed on publishing the line resolutions.

2. In order to insure the speediest possible publication, bulletins smaller than 48 pages can be published. Similarly, bulletins larger than 48 pages can be published, as, for example, in cases where it is desirable to include several contributions on a single theme, and the total pages number more than 48. The total number of pages for the discussion, however, remains 1152, the equivalent of 24 bulletins of 48 pages.

3. In order to attempt to achieve a balanced rhythm to the discussion, and to assure that adequate space will remain for the latter part of the discussion, the initial guideline shall be for a division of space into four periods, as follows:

I.	May, June, July, August	192 pages
II.	September, October, Nov.	288 pages
III.	December, January, Feb.	336 pages
IV.	March, April, May	336 pages

Any unused space during one period shall be carried over to the next period, i. e., if only 162 pages are published in period I, then an additional 30 pages will be available during period II.

4. It is strongly urged that articles be kept short. If, during a given time period the material submitted exceeds the space allotment, the parity commission shall meet to consider what space restrictions need be made. Among the considerations to take into account in such an eventuality are the following:

a. the need to assure a fair division of space between comrades supporting counterposed lines in various topics,

b. the need to assure a fair amount of space to comrades advancing independent views on particular topics,

c. the need to assure the best possible balance between topics under discussion, taking account of the probability that some topics will generate more discussion than others,

d. the need to assure maximum participation in the discussion (shorter articles will allow more participation),

5. After each new international tendency is formed, on the basis of a written platform, the parity commission shall meet to discuss the allocation of space in the bulletin.

6. In accordance with the motion adopted at the February 12-15, 1976 IEC meeting, "Material accepted for publication in the internal bulletin prior to February 15, 1976, but not yet published, is not to be counted as part of the total of 24 bulletins of 48 pages each."

7. Material accepted for publication in the discussion bulletin for the previous world congress, but not yet published, is to be published during this discussion period.

* * * * *

ATTACHMENT B

LETTER TO THE UNITED SECRETARIAT FROM
THE SWP

COPY

June 31, 1976

United Secretariat

Dear Comrades,

For your information, the enclosed letter has been sent to the following organizations: Lutte Ouvriere, Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International, Combat Ouvriere (Antilles), Spark (USA), Workers Socialist League (England), Communist Internationalist League (Greece), Socialist Bloc (Colombia), Revolutionary Socialist Union (Colombia), LEARM (Argentina),

Comradely
s/ Barry Sheppard
National Organization Secretary

* * *

COPY

14 Charles Lane
New York, N. Y. 10014
June 28, 1976

Dear Comrades,

We would like to invite a delegation of your organization, as well as any of your members who may be interested, to attend as observers the open sessions of the Twenty-Eighth National Convention of the Socialist Workers Party. The convention will take place August 7-14 in Ohio.

This will be an especially important convention for the SWP. It will assess the results of the turn that the party has carried out to take advantage of new opportunities for political work in the trade unions, the antifacist struggle, and the Chicano, Puerto Rican, and women's movements.

In addition, reports will be given on the SWP's suit against the government which is without precedent in the United States. The SWP is demanding spying, burglaries, and other operations of the FBI and CIA against the SWP be halted forthwith. The SWP is the only political group on the left in the United States that has taken advantage of the atmosphere produced

by Watergate to launch an offensive in defense of democratic rights. The FBI and CIA have been forced to turn over thousands of pages of secret documents involving their operations against the labor movement, the Black movement and the socialist movement.

The case is expected to come to trial in late 1976 or early 1977. Much of the trial will focus on the ideas of Marxism and the right of revolutionary socialists to organize politically. Another key question at issue in the suit is the right of the SWP to maintain fraternal relationships with revolutionists in other countries.

In addition, the delegates will discuss our presidential election campaign, which is the largest the SWP has ever conducted.

The agenda of the convention will include: (1) a report on the political situation in the United States; (2) a report and resolution on the current stage of the Chicano movement; (3) a report and resolution on the struggle of Puerto Ricans in the United States; (4) party tasks and perspectives report; and (5) reports on political issues under discussion in the world Trotskyist movement.

In addition to the convention sessions, workshops and meetings will be organized to discuss the party's work in various trade unions, in defense campaigns for political prisoners, in the women's liberation movement, in the Black struggle, and other areas. Two special presentations will be made--one by Tony Thomas on developments in Southern Africa, and one by Mary-Alice Waters on the place of women's liberation in the struggle for socialism.

Simultaneous translation of convention sessions will be available in Spanish, French and other languages if needed.

Most sessions of the convention will be open to invited guests and observers. Some sessions will be closed, delegates only having the right to attend.

Details on costs, transportation to Ohio, etc., are enclosed.

Fraternally yours,
s/ Barry Sheppard
National Organization Secretary

cc: United Secretariat of the Fourth International

* * * *

ATTACHMENT C. CORRESPONDENCE FROM LUTTE OUVRIERE.

1. LETTER FROM LUTTE OUVRIERE TO THE UNITED SECRETARIAT. (Translation by Lutte Ouvriere.)

Dear comrades,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * * * *

2. LETTER FROM THE UNITED SECRETARIAT MAJORITY TO LUTTE OUVRIERE, (Translation,)

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

Dear Comrades,

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

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

We do not delude ourselves that the Fourth International, as it exists today, is the Fourth International that Trotsky wished to found after 1933: a mass revolutionary International capable of playing the role of "general staff of the world revolution", not just on paper, but in fact. We see ourselves as one of the nuclei that will constitute this future mass communist International, a nucleus that believes it is working most systematically to create such an International.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fraternally,
The United Secretariat of the
Fourth International

* * * * *

(NOTE: Earlier letters between Lutte Ouvriere and the United Secretariat were included in the April 21, 1976, mailing to the Steering Committee.)

* * * * *

ATTACHMENT D: MOTIONS AND STATEMENT ON THE PORTUGUESE ELECTIONS.

1. MOTION BY GALOIS.

The United Secretariat considers that the call for a vote for Otelo Carvalho, or for either Pato or Carvalho, in the Portuguese presidential elections would have been incorrect on the grounds of principle, since Carvalho was not a working class candidate. He was a bourgeois candidate.

2. MOTION BY JONES.

The preferable course in the Portuguese presidential elections was to present a Trotskyist candidate. This having proved impossible to realise, the correct course in the concrete situation in Portugal was to have called for a vote for Carvalho--characterizing this as a centrist candidature and centrism, of course, being a current within the workers movement.

3. STATEMENT BY CLAUDIO, DURET, FOURIER, GEORGES, JONES, RUDI, WALTER, WERNER.

Neither by the social forces which it represented or which supported it, nor by the objective function it played in the current phase of the class struggle in Portugal, nor by the contents of its political platform, can the candidature of Otelo de Carvalho in the presidential elections be considered a bourgeois one. Carvalho did not represent, nor was he supported by, any bourgeois political party or organization, or any sector of the Portuguese or international bourgeoisie, or any sector of the Portuguese bourgeois officer corps. His programme, while inadequate or wrong on many questions, contains general anti-capitalist planks which make it unacceptable to the bourgeoisie as a class: a clear opposition to private property; a stand in favor of generalized nationalization of the means of production; a stand in favor of generalized workers control; a stand in favor of the defense of the workers interests against those of the employers; a stand in favor of strict independence of the trade-unions from the state. No bourgeois political force anywhere in the world defends such a programme or could defend such a programme, even in a "demagogic" stance.

There are many ambiguities and wrong positions in Otelo de Carvalho's platform, especially with regard to the bourgeois nature of the state, the army and the Constitution; but on all these issues, the CP--not to speak of the SP--platform shares these ambiguities and errors. In fact, the only political organized forces which supported the Carvalho candidacy were centrist working class organizations, a fact which reflects itself in the Carvalho political platform.

Obviously, the decision of the centrists to try--essentially for electoral opportunist reasons--to concentrate

the protest vote of the working class against the austerity plan of the bourgeoisie and the social democrats (shamefully supported by the CP leaders) behind a petty-bourgeois demagogue is in itself regrettable, reflects the unprincipled nature of the centrists' politics, should be criticized sharply by the revolutionary marxists, and gives the Carvalho candidature an ambiguous and contradictory character. Carvalho's proclamations of "independence" from his "supporters" (at least in the first phase of his election campaign), his "non-party" statements, are part of the same contradictory and combined character of his candidature. Revolutionary marxists should not fail to criticize all these positions, all the more so as they correspond to certain weaknesses of the class consciousness of the Portuguese working class, still partially marked by 48 years of corporatist regime.

In addition, one should not underestimate the dynamics of these contradictory poles of the Carvalho candidature, with a clear radicalization during the final phase of the election campaign, a campaign characterized by the shameful support given to Eanes by the main working class party, the SP, and by the no less shameful refusal of the CP candidate to attack Eanes and his programme openly. Therefore, in spite of all its weaknesses and contradictions, the Carvalho candidature cannot be declared a "bourgeois" one without falling into schematic formalism, reducing the class nature of a candidate exclusively to his personal history or to a judgment of his individual character.

The objective function of the Carvalho candidature in the given phase of class struggle in Portugal, was not to serve any political maneuver of the bourgeoisie--no sector of that bourgeoisie is opposed to the austerity plan. It was to express, in an indirect and partially inadequate way, the wish of an important sector (in certain places even the majority) of the working class to oppose the course of de facto acceptance of the bourgeois austerity measures, in which the SP and CP leaderships were engaged from the beginning of the election campaign. If "class independence" means independence from the political designs and interests of the capitalist class, Carvalho was no less and no more independent from these than Pato, not to speak about Soares.

Therefore, we reject the characterization of this candidature as a bourgeois one, and we consider that the question whether to give critical support or not to that candidature was a purely tactical question for the Portuguese trotskysts to decide, and not a matter of principle.

* * * * *

ATTACHMENT E. MOTIONS AND STATEMENT ON THE MEXICAN ELECTIONS.

1. MOTION BY GALOIS.

The United Secretariat considers that the position with regard to Mexican Stalinism contained in the article by Comrade Ricardo and the public political course with regard to the Mexican Stalinists' election campaign followed by the Liga Socialista (Tendencia Militante) is a departure from basic Marxist principles. The United Secretariat will issue a statement of its opinion on these positions.

2. STATEMENT BY CLAUDIO, FOURIER, GEORGES, RUDI, WALTER, WERNER.

1.) We consider that the election campaign of the Liga Socialista, while correctly based upon critical support to the CP presidential candidate--the only working class candidate in that election--made too little criticisms of the CP political line, i. e., did not use all the opportunities created for the defense of the full programme of revolutionary marxism in Mexico. Critical support of opportunist working class parties and (or) candidates should always be accompanied by propaganda for our full program.

2.) This weak side of the Liga Socialista election campaign was at least partially the result of the electoral agreement with the CP, to have a common election platform. While in principle the conclusion of a common minimum election platform corresponding to key-problems of the class struggle in a given country at a given stage is admissible, we do not think that this was called for in Mexico at this moment with the CP, nor that the adopted common platform was sufficient to give an answer to the key problems with which the Mexican toiling masses are confronted today.

3.) On the other hand, we believe that the attempts of the Mexican and international minority faction to condemn the LS election policies as "capitulation to stalinism", and to present the common election platform as stalinist, are factional exaggerations which did not help clarify the political issues but were intended only to transform the debate around the LS election into cheap factional point scoring. An election platform which in a country like Mexico does include neither the revolution by stages, nor the bloc with the national bourgeoisie, nor peaceful coexistence, nor socialism in one country, cannot be called stalinism. Healy-Lambert type of witchhunts should not become substitutes for serious political discussions inside the F. I.

* * * * *

LETTER FROM WALTER TO LIGA SOCIALISTA
(TENDENCIA MILITANTE).

July 19, 1976

Dear Comrade Ricardo,

The USec meeting of May 1976 instructed the Bureau to write to you to ask some clarifications about formulas contained in your article "Reply to an Essay on Sectarianism", before deciding whether this article should be published in IP or in an English language internal bulletin.

Let us start by saying that you should in any case change the reference in the first paragraph to IP being published by the SWP. This is not the case, and could, in addition, create legal problems for the American comrades.

We agree with you that a revolutionary programme is in and by itself insufficient to qualify a group as revolutionists. Active intervention in the class struggle, and intervention in such a way as to further objectively the cause of emancipation of the working class and all the oppressed masses, is an indispensable prerequisite for such a qualification too. In other words: the programme must at least start to be implemented in the living class struggle, a struggle for its implementation must begin.

However, we think it wrong to jump from this statement to the conclusion that, possessing a correct programme could be divorced from the need of intervention in the class struggle and implantation in the working class. The two aspects of a revolutionary organization complement each other. Without a correct programme, a revolutionary intervention in the class struggle is impossible. Without revolutionary intervention in the class struggle, the value of the programme is degraded to that of a ritual text. To counterpose the programme to the active intervention is as wrong as to counterpose the active intervention in the class struggle to the programme.

Do you agree with this? If not, why? If yes, don't you think it would be wise to correct some of your formulations, in order not to allow any misinterpretation of your thought, which allow your opponents to shift the debate towards artificial new issues?

Likewise you are right to state that electoral alliances (as well as any other form of "blocs") with working class organisations are not in and by themselves contrary to revolutionary marxist principles.

They are acceptable, if their programmatic basis is correct, and if they serve the purpose of furthering the class struggle in a concrete situation, by helping the mobilization of the working class, or at least of some of its advanced layers, around the key issues of class politics with which it is objectively confronted. Obviously, such alliances can never be concluded on the full programme of revolutionary marxism. Therefore, the revolutionary marxists must always retain their freedom to propagandize that full programme, and to criticize the inconsistencies, weaknesses and opportunism of their temporary allies, when (and especially!) during such electoral periods.

We believe therefore that the accusation directed against you that you have created a "basis for a Popular Front" or "declared the stalinists to be revolutionists", are not confirmed by the text of the electoral platform you signed, nor by your general behavior during the election campaign. They smell of demagogy and can be dismissed as an exercise of blind factionalism.

However, some of the formulations of your article, and some of the attitudes of the LS during the election campaign, create ambiguities around other issues. You say that the electoral platform stresses the unity of the struggle for democracy and for socialism, and add that this implies a contradiction with the classical stalinist concept of the revolution by stages. This is correct. The leaders of the CPM who signed that platform have already been charged with "concessions" (if not capitulation) to trotskyism" on that basis. This is a programmatic concession made by the stalinists to the trotskyists, and not vice-versa as your critics assume. You also point out correctly that the stalinists will pay a price for this in the future.

But when dealing with CPs like the Mexican CP, we are dealing with organizations trained in opportunism, i. e., dismissing as secondary considerations about programme and programmatic concessions, whether to the "left" or to the "right". Therefore, for them to sign a platform does not mean so much. This is the balance-sheet of the whole past experience with stalinism, which we should not dismiss lightly. So it is imprudent, to say the least, to write "Whoever stands consistently on this is a revolutionist and our ally", without precisng (1) That what is decisive is consistent practice (especially in a prerevolutionary period) and not just signature of platforms; and (2) that we exclude that a party with a record like the one of the Mexican CP could suddenly become qualitatively different from what it has been in the past, at least as long as it has not gone through a basic shake-up and a tumultuous internal upheaval, discussion and split.

Thus, to quote what the old leader of the CPM told you, as "proof" that they will never conclude an alliance with some sector of the bourgeoisie is naive, unfounded and miseducates your own comrades and readers, as well as those sympathizers of the CPM whose ears you have caught through the common election campaign (the possibility to make oneself heard in that area is, of course, an entirely positive outcome of your campaign. But now everything depends upon what you are telling them!). As long as the CP has not basically and in practice broken with stalinism and the two-stage-theory (which it has not up to this day, and which involves much more than signing an electoral platform with you, making some programmatic concessions to trotskyism), it is most likely that at a moment when a mass upsurge will make this credible, realistic and useful for some sectors of the Mexican ruling class, the leaders of that party will indeed again offer a class collaborationist bloc to such sectors, as they have done in the past.

You could, of course, at that moment use their present statements and formulations against them, and make gains among their members and followers, provided you yourself do not create illusions in future developments of that party. That is why we advise you to eliminate all ambiguity on that question in your current explanations, to your own members and sympathizers as well as to the working class at large.

Finally, we have the impression that, carried away by the "unitary" momentum of the common election campaign (from which, obviously, big gains could be made from a propagandistic and organizational point of view), you have not sufficiently used the occasion to conduct the independent trotskyist defense of our full programme forward during the campaign. We understand that this needs a lot of tactical flexibility and astuteness, in order to avoid looking like sectarians in the eyes of thousands of advanced workers who were reached by the election campaign. Nevertheless it is an absolute duty for a revolutionary organization not to subordinate everything to the purely current (and in this case propagandistic-electoral) aspect of its activity, and to remain capable of defending its own political and programmatic independence. This also pays in the long run, especially when (as is unavoidable) the CPM will make a "right" turn after its current "left" turn.

Please let us have your answer before September 5, so that we can deal with this matter at the September session of the USec.

For the United Secretariat / Walter

REPORT ON THE CONVENTION OF THE INDIAN SECTION

by Betsey Stone

The recent national convention of the Communist League of India reflected the progress made by the section over the past several years. A good number of newly recruited workers and students were present at the convention and it was clear that as a result of the growth of the section, a new leadership is developing made up of experienced older comrades and more recent recruits.

The convention was preceded by an extensive written discussion of the resolutions under consideration. This was an important achievement given the obvious difficulties of organizing such a discussion in India. The written discussion and convention itself were extremely democratic with full provision made for the presentation of documents and ideas reflecting different points of view.

The political resolution passed by the conference took a clear position in opposition to Ghandi's emergency measures. The resolution corrected an earlier wrong position taken by the Central Committee which was unclear in its criticism of the emergency and the 20-point economic program.

Resolutions and discussion of trade union work and student work reflected the fact that the section, despite its small size, has done some effective work in these areas. A constitution for the section was passed and an extensive discussion was held on how to strengthen the organizational functioning of the section.

A comrade from the leadership of the Japanese section was present at the convention. The actions of this comrade made it clear that, despite the gains made by the Indian section, some comrades who support the IMT are doing work in India behind the back of the section and trying to build an organization separate from the section.

In the course of the convention one of the few members of the section who support the IMT resigned. The pretext for this was the demand by this comrade, made without warning in the midst of the discussion, that either the convention agenda be changed to discuss some questions he wanted to raise or he would resign. After the convention voted not to change the agenda under such a threat, the comrade resigned. The Japanese comrade, who spent a great deal of time with this IMTer before and during the convention, gave no indication of trying to persuade him to remain in the section. In fact, he claimed he had no opinion on the question.

Later the convention passed a resolution addressed to the United Secretariat, condemning and protesting the actions of the IMT supporters from outside the country who were working behind the back of the section to build a separate group. In the course of the discussion on this motion, the comrade from Japan admitted that he was in fact doing work in India without collaborating with the section. He said it was impossible for him to direct contacts he made in India to the section for "security reasons". He said he did not think the Indian section had correct practices in regard to security and that he would not subject others to these practices.

Comrades from the section answered by explaining that if there were anything wrong with their security practices they, and only they, must be the judge of this since it is a tactical question based on the concrete situation in India. Comrades stated that they felt that the matter of security should not be a decisive criterion for joining the Trotskyist party. They considered that the decisive criterias were: agreement with the program of the party; agreement with Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution and agreement with the program of the Fourth International including the Transitional Program. The comrades stated that the matter of security should not be used as a pretense for the disloyal activities of the IMT comrades since such activities had taken place for some time and the security question was not raised previously.

The resolution condemning the activity of some IMT leaders, which called for the unity of Fourth Internationalists in India, was passed almost unanimously. One IMT supporter even voted for it.

Despite the disloyal activity of some of the IMT supporters, the conference was a very enthusiastic one and at the close of the sessions a number of old timers commented on the fact that the convention represented a real step forward in the struggle to build a section of the Fourth International in India.

* * * *

Exchange of correspondence between the Political Bureau of the Liga Operaria (Brazil)
and two comrades in Canada.

TRANSLATION

Excerpts of a letter to two comrades in Canada from the Liga Operaria (Brazil).

May 10, 1976

Companheiros,

About 15 days ago, we received your letter. We are quite surprised at the fact that you are not receiving our paper regularly, since we are sending it to the Americans every month. To avoid any more problems, we will send to you directly (the first bundle is already mailed).

Your letter has caused surprise, and concern. There is a lot we can't understand regarding your political positions. We are going to try to systematize the information we have:

1. On the one hand, the Americans tell us that you agree with them and with the Canadian section as a whole, on Portugal. Thus you would disagree with us and the Argentinians on this question. Your letter, although not very clear, reflects this position. This would be another difference between us, apart from the problem of the latest elections in Brazil and other minor differences;

2. On the other hand, the Argentinians have told us that you people agree with them and they have assured us that you are, secretly, trying to split the Canadians.

For us, to clarify this point is very important. It is true that we are in political agreement with the Argentinians on Portugal, however we are in total disagreement with the divisive methods they have been utilizing and we disagree even more with secret faction operations. We favor that you carry out the political struggle inside the Canadian party for a correct position on Portugal, but you should do this in the open, facing whatever the consequences of this attitude. It would be very important that you clarify this information we got from the Argentinians, since this is a methodological difference we have with them and we hope not to have with you. We think that among us, members of the same world party, there should be complete trust and loyalty. We cannot do the same things we criticize in the IMT. Our position remains the same as expressed in our letter to the USec. . . . We have only one copy of this letter for us. To divulge this letter is up to you, we will not do it. Its contents was discussed and approved by our Political Committee. We also made it known to all comrades through our internal bulletin. Thus your answer will be important and if you want, we could publish it in our internal bulletin, as well.

* * * * *

TRANSLATION

Letter from two comrades in Canada to the Political Committee of "Liga Operaria" (Brazil).

July 25, 1976

Dear comrades:

In answering your latest letter of May 10, 1976 we deal with only its most important and urgent aspect. We shall deal specifically with the questions raised in relation to our agreement with the political positions of the LTF and our loyalty to the Fourth International's organizational methods and structures.

1. For two reasons your letter did not surprise us too much:

a) First of all, we had heard rumors about the supposed existence of a pro-PST grouping inside the Canadian party. But none of the comrades in Canada have voiced their agreement with the PST's positions or methods, so we were wondering what might be the reason for such a rumor. Now, we learn that it concerns us!

b) Secondly, we have been following closely the bizarre results of the PST's organizational methods in Mexico and more recently in Portugal. No doubt you are aware of what happened in Mexico. In Portugal, the PRT leadership, directly assisted by PSTers, expelled a whole group of comrades just before a congress. The reasons given by the PRT's leaders to justify such drastic action range from accusing the young comrades of "gossiping against the leadership", "lack of proletarian morality," to "talking politics with comrades from other cells". To whip up hysteria against these comrades and avoid any possibility of a rational political discussion, rumors were spread that they might actually be ELP agents (that is, agent provocateurs infiltrated into the PRT by that right-wing terrorist group). Finally these comrades were expelled in a farcical trial using methods completely alien to the traditions of our movement.

Obviously the "crime" of these comrades was a bit more concrete and political than the ridiculous charges indicate: they had some criticisms of the current line and leadership of the PRT. Some of them agreed with the LTF on Portugal. To the PRT (and PST) leadership, this was an unpardonable act.

2. When the Argentinian comrades say that the two of us agree with them on Portugal, they must be referring to the August 1975 LTF meeting, since this was the last time we discussed politics with leaders of the PST. The document "The Key Issues in the Portuguese Revolution" was adopted at that August meeting. We agree with the general line of this document, and therefore it is entirely

correct to say that we agreed with the Argentinian comrades at that time. It is equally correct to say that we also agreed with the American comrades and with all the other comrades of the LTF who were present there and who voted unanimously for that document,

You should keep in mind that we were present at all the meetings, as part of the Canadian delegation. We don't mean to say that there were no political differences between the Americans and the Argentinians. What we are saying is that a general agreement on political line was reached after a lot of discussion; a number of suggestions by the Argentinians were accepted to be incorporated in the draft thesis presented by the Americans. We agreed with the Argentinians on Portugal, as of August 1975, to judge from the document we all voted for, and the political discussions we took part in.

Only later, around last October, did the Argentinians start to raise disagreements with the resolution. They claimed that the published version of the resolution did not reflect the real agreements reached at the August meeting. "real agreements" supposedly reached in private meetings between Moreno and Hansen. Obviously, the Americans flatly denied these charges. And the overwhelming majority of the LTF comrades present at the meeting have since stated that the published version of the resolution did in fact carry the line agreed on by all participants at the time.

Thus, we agreed with the Argentinians on Portugal until they repudiated "The Key Issues, . ." and shortly thereafter broke with the LTF altogether. As far as we are concerned, we still think that that document reflected exactly the August 1975 discussion, incorporating whole paragraphs from the Argentinians' contributions. We still agree with the political line outlined in that document. So, it is very likely that we have an important political disagreement with you over Portugal.

3. According to your letter, the Argentinians have also assured you that we are actively working to split the Canadian section over Portugal. They did not forget to explain that we were doing this secretly, that is behind the backs of the Canadian leadership. This kind of accusation, unprincipled as it is, has undoubtedly a tremendous advantage: it is very difficult to prove the opposite. How can we ever prove that we are not secretly splitting the Canadians? At the same time the Argentinians are not supposed to present any evidence to back up their charges, since it is a secret affair.

At any rate, the first thing we did upon receipt of your letter was to translate it and discuss its contents with the Canadian leadership. We are also giving the Canadian Political Committee a copy of this letter to you. This is hardly the approach of those engaged in a secret splitting operation.

Incidentally, there is a very weak point in this malicious accusation: the fact that one of us has written several signed articles in the Canadian Section's newspaper on the Portuguese revolution. The political line of those articles could be easily checked by comrades as well informed as the Argentinian leaders. They would notice just by reading the headlines that those articles carry an opposite line to theirs. So, what would be the political reason to work to split the Canadian party?

However, the most serious aspect of this whole slander is that you people, who have known us for so long, could take it seriously. That is a clear indication of the deteriorated atmosphere in our movement, in which secret factions do exist. This creates an atmosphere in which comrades suspect other comrades of saying one thing and doing just the opposite. We will never succeed in building a movement if such methods are the accepted way to function.

However, as far as we are concerned, we want to protest in the strongest possible terms against the story the Argentinian leaders are spreading about us. We consider it to be a vile slander on our integrity as revolutionists.

Of course, you have good reason to demand a clarification from us. You know only too well that the Argentinian leadership routinely uses such unprincipled methods in their intervention abroad.

4. We have a long history of opposing the way in which the Argentinians intervene in other groups. This goes back to the times of the Starting Point Group in Chile. You know very well the several occasions on which the Argentinians proposed "miraculous solutions" for the future of our small group of exiles. The political and organizational problems that those forceful interventions caused to our group in Chile were the main obstacle we had to overcome to build the Starting Point Group. In our opinion it was only comparable to the challenge posed to us when we had to decide to leave the rarified atmosphere of exile work and plunge into the Chilean class struggle, joining the Chilean section.

Had we followed the Argentinians' advice we would not have a group in Brazil now. You know better than we that instead of starting the group in Brazil, the Argentinian leadership insisted that the present leaders of your group should go to Portugal. We agreed with you when you resisted this kind of "advice". We have always

opposed this kind of intervention. What is actually at stake is the fundamental question of building a national leadership, skilled in the particular political problems of its own country and with moral and political authority before its ranks. This is only possible if it really leads the party, especially during major crises and on occasions when far-reaching decisions have to be made.

Of course, we all favor international collaboration-- exchange of experiences, information, discussion of political line, etc. Our own collaboration with you is a good example of how international exchanges can avoid any undue interventionism.

This question is particularly important for small groups, struggling to establish an initial nucleus of cadres, and to sink roots in the class struggle. It is also important for groups like yours which must work under difficult conditions of repression and isolation. You have every right to demand a loyal, open collaboration which helps you meet the challenges you face. To spread deliberately false information and flimsy rumors among comrades who have the greatest difficulty, because of objective conditions, to inform themselves of what is happening, is to do serious harm to the Trotskyist movement.

On the other hand, your letter to the United Secretariat explaining your positions on the question of the LTF's split over Portugal was a very good example of principled functioning. It was even more significant because you agreed politically with the Argentinians on Portugal and Angola. Actually this was an example that the whole International could benefit from.

Your stand in defense of the organizational principles of Trotskyism is very important, and sets the stage for our political collaboration with you at present and in the future. We also think that our political differences may be solved over time. We can have a frank and honest political discussion because of the strong principled stand your group has taken on important questions of basic party-building methods. After reading your letter, we feel that on this decisive question we agree entirely.

* * * * *

TRANSLATION

Letter from Liga Operaria (Brazil) to the Leadership of the Fourth International, June 10, 1976

The Political Committee of the Liga Operaria (Brazil) has decided to clarify its political position on Portugal and Angola -- adopted at its last national convention -- and its relationship with the Leninist Trotskyist Faction to the entire Fourth International.

- L. In summary, the second national convention of the Liga Operaria approved the following position:
 - a. We consider the Portuguese process to be a workers, socialist revolution in progress.
 - b. We characterize the current stage of the Portuguese process as prerevolutionary.
 - c. The main strategic task of revolutionists there is to promote and develop the organs of dual power and, on the tactical level, to promote and develop the struggles for democratic rights, defense of the standard of living, and the agrarian reform.
 - d. The building of a great mass Trotskyist party in Portugal assumes fundamental importance, a party capable of leading the masses to victory in the socialist revolution and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Such a task falls on the two Trotskyist groups now existing in Portugal and requires full support from the Fourth International.
 - e. With regard to Angola, we characterize the MPLA as a revolutionary movement of national liberation.
 - f. Faced with the civil war, our position should be to support the military camp of the MPLA while maintaining our organizational independence and fighting for the development of organs of dual power, for the expropriation of the imperialists, and for a workers and peasants government.
2. With regard to the LTF, the Liga Operaria had set a deadline of three months for the faction as a whole to hold another meeting to work out a common position on Portugal and Angola, on the basis of which our remaining in that body would be decided.

3. That deadline has passed without another meeting having taken place. The political positions of that time on the revolutionary processes in question remain the same, positions we deeply disagree with. Thus, we feel it our duty as Trotskyist revolutionists to withdraw from the faction. Meanwhile, we reaffirm our position of maintaining the fraternal relations that always characterized our dealings with the comrades who remain in the LTF.

4. The Liga Operaria also decided to attend and actively participate in the meeting -- initiated by the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores of Argentina -- that will be held by the parties that left the LTF previously for the purpose of discussing the Portuguese and Angolan revolutions, and the possibility of forming a new tendency or faction.

5. We are, therefore, asking the leadership of the Fourth International to inform all cothinking parties of our decision.

For the Victory of the Portuguese Revolution!
For the Unity of the Fourth International!

Liga Operaria
(Political Committee)

cc: PST (Argentina) and SWP (United States)

* * * *

REPLY BY THE PRT (PORTUGAL) TO THE APPEAL
OF THE COMRADES EXPELLED FROM THE PRT

TRANSLATION

April 30, 1976

To the signers of the letter, "To the Central Leadership and Members of the PRT":

In regard to your letter, dated March 26 and delivered March 31, the PRT Central Leadership decided:

1) That the resolutions adopted by the full meeting of Lisbon Region membership on February 1 remain valid, and the disciplinary measures then applied can only be reconsidered by the National Congress of the party (1). Therefore, in compliance with the decision of the February 2 Plenary, the request for immediate reintegration made by the 16 ex-members and candidate members who signed the letter is rejected.

2) To reject the arguments in the letter in question as being an amalgam of distortions and complete falsifications that restate the already known "arguments" that were discussed and rejected by the PRT membership as nothing but slanders.

3) To point out the absence of any kind of self-criticism on the part of the individuals who were disciplined. (2)

4) To also point out that these individuals, after being disciplined, did not take the recourse of asking for a chance to defend themselves before the highest body of the party--the National Congress--and instead chose the easy option of spreading slanders and lies among comrades of other sections of the Fourth International, (3) and even more serious, spreading slanderous accusations against the party organization and against the party's ranks and leadership among persons completely alien to the Fourth International, namely among activists of the CP in the Faculty of Letters, independent students and opponent organizations in the Amadora Liceu and the D. Joao de Castro Liceu, etc. (4) To point out, finally, that the signers of the letter are to be found involved in building an organization identified by the initials "GAS," which printed and distributed an election manifesto accusing the PRT of capitulating to Social Democracy and insinuating that it did not defend the political independence of the workers; that this manifesto was signed, "Grupo de Marxistas Revolucionarios, ex-militantes do PRT" (Group of Revolutionary Marxists, ex-members of the PRT), with obvious intent to sow confusion, and that they disrupted some party activities during the election campaign. (5)

5) The above-mentioned facts oblige us to consider the request for readmission and the letter in its totality as examples of cynicism and duplicity.

6) To make the text of the letter, "To the Central Leadership and Militants of the PRT," known to the party cells and to report the decision made on it to them.

s/ Central Leadership of the PRT

NOTES:

(1) The Plenary, as the highest body existing until the convening of the Congress, expressly voted at the February 1 meeting that the sanctions taken could be appealed to the National Congress by any of those concerned or any other party member and that those who were disciplined had the right to appear personally in their own defense at the Congress if they so requested.

(2) This deserves special mention, because in the plenary meeting those disciplined admitted the accuracy of a large part of the accusations against them and acknowledged having violated the party's disciplinary norms, although in some cases they asked that less severe disciplinary measures be applied, such as being dropped to sympathizers or candidate members.

(3) This activity was unfortunately actively supported by some members of the SWP leadership, such as Gerry Foley and Barry Sheppard, who took the declarations of the expelled individuals as the truth without first bothering to check their veracity and without consulting the PRT leadership.

(4) Notably in the case of the PCP activists in Letters, of independent students and members of various tendencies in the Amadora and D. Joao de Castro Liceus, who were given a chance to backup their own criticisms of the AST and PRT with the manufactured slanders provided by the individuals disciplined who attacked the internal functioning of the party and the plenary session and repeated the slanders against the moral character of party members and members of the leadership. A relative of one of those expelled, a member of the CDS, has also taken advantage of this opportunity, spreading these same accusations to anyone willing to listen.

(5) We also saw these slanders used in a debate our party held in the Liceu D. Joao de Castro, in which these people associated themselves with a leader of Healy's Portuguese group, a fact that was subsequently noted with satisfaction in issue No. 13 of this group's organ, Vanguarda Operaria.

* * *

LETTER REQUESTING ENTRY IN THE LCI (PORTUGAL)
BY COMRADES OF THE GRUPOS DE ACCAO SOCIALISTA

TRANSLATION

To the leadership and members of the Liga Comunista Internacionalista, Portuguese sympathizing organization of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International,

Comrades:

We, revolutionary Marxists and ex-members of the Partido Revolucionario dos Trabalhadores, considering:

1. Our firm determination to struggle by all means for the construction of the Revolutionary Workers Party, the Portuguese section of the Fourth International, as the only correct form to fight for the unity and independence of the workers movement on the road to the victory of the Proletarian and Socialist Revolution;

2. The impossibility of continuing this struggle at this moment inside the Partido Revolucionario dos Trabalhadores, because of improper organizational measures taken by the leadership of this organization against some of us and their refusal to agree to our reintegration so we can present our defense at a Congress; something most paradoxical when they claim to be involved in the process of unification of the Portuguese revolutionary Marxists.

3. That at the present conjuncture of the class struggle in Portugal when the struggle for unity and political clarification among the Portuguese Trotskyists should take place in the perspective of principled fusion of the existing organizations, the creation of a new organization supporting the Fourth International could become an obstacle to the accomplishment of this objective,

4. This urgent necessity, to gain broader and broader sectors of the masses of the revolutionary Marxist program, which every day becomes more important because of the disastrous results to which the line of the reformists and centrists leads.

We request our integration into the Liga Comunista Internacionalista, agreeing to accept the principles of democratic centralism which guides its functioning.

Lisbon, August 3, 1976

Ex-members of the Partido Revolucionario dos Trabalhadores: Ernesto, Alexandre, Frederico, Maria, Evaristo, Marco, Silvia.

* * * *

TRANSLATION

Letter from a comrade of the Chilean Partido Socialista Revolucionario to the Socialist Workers Party(US)

Bogota
June 19, 1976

Dear comrade,

We have noticed with astonishment that in the provisional agenda prepared by the International Executive Committee plenum of February for the Eleventh World Congress, Latin America is not even mentioned. For those who drafted said agenda, Latin America has virtually become a Forgotten Continent. Is it possible that individuals of such political capacity as those mentioned could have committed so huge an error? It is inconceivable. Sometimes I even think that an agenda like this one could be the product of an opportunist agreement between the predominant tendencies, in search of a deal that would eliminate the debate on the outcome of the tactical application of the political line approved by the Ninth Congress for Latin America, a line which, in my opinion, was merely placed aside at the Tenth Congress.

This is not an effort to attempt to reraise a question that was already supposedly overcome through the debates held at the Tenth Congress, in which the Chilean problem was merely dealt with obliquely in a miserable way, evading the responsibility the leadership of the Fourth had in relation to the Chilean section. The impressionism which served as a basis for the drafting of the Ninth World Congress thesis was torn to shreds as a line for Latin America, by the development of events, and the current general situation eloquently confirms this fact. Moreover, this is not an attempt to go into all of this in depth. It is also necessary to examine in depth the political line approved by the Tenth World Congress and carried out by the leadership in each of the countries, particularly those where there are (several) sections or groups claiming to belong to the Fourth. The recognition of different groups in some countries, as in the case of Argentina, without placing as a precondition their unification in the shortest possible amount of time, has only served to block, if not to paralyze, the development of the Fourth. Moreover, in the case of Chile, the leadership abused the agreement reached at the Tenth World Congress by recognizing the Liga Comunista as a sympathizing section after the Congress took place.

One could argue that the official section has shown no signs of life, but the United Secretariat knows that there are two tendencies in it, the majority led by Montes and the minority led by the author of this letter. Furthermore, they know that the minority tendency has a full strategic and tactical political line for functioning, contained in an 18-page document with which members of the United Secretariat are very familiar, and, according to Comrade V., agree with, to the point of asking me, through him, permission to publish it, although that has not been done to this day. This document was sent by me to Comrade V., who told me on more than one occasion that it would be published in a special bulletin, which has also not been done. For that reason, the positions of the Chilean minority tendency are not known, even to the Chilean comrades who are abroad and much less to the sections of the Fourth.

I think that if you are interested in reading this document, you should formally request it of Comrade V. Refer to it as the document by Comrade C. on the Chilean problem.

Going back to the subject of the Eleventh World Congress, I point out that the Liga Comunista and the Liga Socialista Revolucionaria of Argentina, are addressing themselves jointly not only to the United Secretariat, but also to the different sections in Latin America, putting forth their views on this question and proposing that they raise the question of including Latin America in said agenda, a request which I take the liberty to extend to your section as well.

With nothing further for now, I send you a fraternal embrace.

* * *

MOTIONS FROM THE AUGUST 3, 1976, USEC MEETING

PASSED: Motion by Walter:

The United Secretariat, having been informed during the last month of decisions taken in several national organizations, which, if the information is correct, restricts in an inadmissible way, the rights of individual members to contact leaders, members, sections, sympathizing sections, or organizations in fraternal sympathy with the Fourth International, instructs the Bureau to write a letter to all the organizations involved in order to try and redress such practices. It has no reason to express itself on only one case of these, as the equality of rights and duties of all Fourth International members is a fundamental principle to be defended.

* * *

DEFEATED: Motion by Jones

To send the following letter to the Political Bureau of the LCR:

"Dear Cdes, We have received a letter from cde. Nemo et. al. On the assumption that the text it contains is the resolution of the PB of the LCR, we have the following points to make.

Whether the LCR decides to send a representative to the SWP Convention is, of course, a matter for the leadership of the LCR. However, we do not believe that the LCR can prevent individual members (from) attending the SWP Convention. Membership of the International, not of a national section, is the basic unit of membership of the Fourth International -- as reflected not merely in general positions, but concretely in the fact that, for example, a national section cannot refuse admittance to a member of another section transferring to their country. Attendance at a national convention of another section (subject to evident technical/material factors), discussion with members of sections etc., must be included as falling under the rights of membership of the International. Therefore, the leadership of the LCR cannot prevent individual members of the LCR (from) attending the SWP convention* -- although naturally such individuals cannot speak in any way in the name of the LCR.

We hope, therefore, the cdes. will adjust their position accordingly.

(* The SWP, of course, is not a section of the Fourth International due to reactionary legislation, however, we extend to it all rights consistent with non-violation of the Voorhis Act.) "

* * *

DEFEATED: Motion by Adair: The United Secretariat considers the motion passed by the PB of the LCR which prohibits all members of the LCR from attending the SWP convention as observers, to be a serious error.

The United Secretariat strongly urges the PB of the LCR to rescind its motion.

* * *