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DOCUMENTS FROM THE DISCUSSION IN SECTIONS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

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Editorial Note

Every section and sympathizing organization of the Fourth International is conducting an internal discussion on the issues before the Fourth World Congress since Reunification (Tenth World Congress). As with the discussion in the Socialist Workers Party, only a small portion of the documents written as contributions to the debate will be submitted to the International Internal Discussion Bulletin. However, many documents from other sections and groups will have a general interest and value to SWP members. Knowledge of these documents will help comrades to understand the context of the debate and clarify the issues being discussed throughout the International. From time to time we will publish selected documents from the discussion in other sections in order to make this information available to the membership of the SWP.

Call for the Formation of a Tendency in the LRT (Belgian Section of the Fourth International) in Support of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction on the Essential Questions

Since the Ninth World Congress, the Fourth International has experienced an extremely sharp internal struggle. We believe that its main cause stems from the International Majority Tendency's (IMT) refusal to recognize and correct the obvious errors committed at the Ninth World Congress. In our opinion, the primary aim of the tendency struggle in the Fourth International must be to correct those errors.

I. Latin America

We declare our agreement with the general line of the document "Argentina and Bolivia—The Balance Sheet." [*International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 10, No. 1, January 1973.]

Two fundamental errors were committed at the Ninth World Congress:

- A strategic orientation of rural guerrilla warfare was adopted (afterwards a quite noticeable shift was made toward urban guerrilla warfare, especially in Argentina; this occurred before the United Secretariat took its distance from the PRT-Combatiente. The following is a highly significant section from the Ninth World Congress resolution on Latin America:

"Even in the case of countries where large mobilizations and class conflicts in the cities may occur first, civil war will take manifold forms of armed struggle, in which the principal axis for a whole period will be rural guerrilla warfare, the term having primarily a geographical-military meaning and not necessarily implying an exclusively peasant composition of the fighting detachments (or even necessarily preponderant peasant composition). In this sense, armed struggle in Latin America means fundamentally guerrilla warfare." ["Draft Resolution on Latin America," in *International Internal Discussion Bulletin* reprint *Discussion on Latin America: 1968-1972*, p. 7.]

- The entire line adopted by the Ninth World Congress was based on a single eventuality: fierce repression against every mass movement, indeed against every strike (the supposition was that the problem of armed struggle would be posed from the beginning of almost any movement). This line disoriented our sections when the mass movements forced the bourgeoisie to retreat and to permit democratic openings, such as in Bolivia under Ovando and Torres and in Argentina at the present time.

The following passage from the Latin American resolution is quite significant for the positions of the Majority:

"... faced with the Cuban workers state, the bourgeoisie cannot help but align itself on the side of imperialism

(leaving aside possible temporary diplomatic maneuvers) and is proving itself absolutely incapable of achieving a program of even the most modest democratic reforms." ["Draft Resolution on Latin America," p. 5.]

Even if there are a few sentences qualifying this, the *practice* that is proposed is always linked to the hypothesis of fierce repression. Guerrilla warfare is necessary:

"In a situation of prerevolutionary crisis such as Latin America is now experiencing on a continental scale, guerrilla warfare can in fact stimulate a revolutionary dynamic, even if at the start the attempt may seem to have come from abroad or to be unilateral (which was the case with Che's Bolivian guerrilla movement)." ["Draft Resolution on Latin America," pp. 7-8.]

We believe that one of the essential tasks of the Tenth World Congress is to draw a balance sheet on the Latin American resolution of the Ninth World Congress, a balance sheet that the IMT refuses to draw, contenting itself instead with stating that the resolution contained synthetic and elliptical statements, and with criticizing the ERP-Santucho when the group had already virtually left the International. Furthermore, we wish to emphasize that drawing a balance sheet on the Ninth World Congress resolution does not mean taking note of whether our Latin American sections have retained a mass base in this or that place, or whether they adapted empirically to the tasks imposed by the political situation, *but instead to determine whether or not the Ninth World Congress resolution prepared them for carrying out these tasks.*

The balance sheet for Bolivia and Argentina is quite clear in this regard, and our conclusion is just as clear: the line of the Ninth World Congress must be overturned.

To assure the greatest clarity on the question of Latin America, we would like to call attention to the following points:

- We are of the opinion that the bourgeoisie there has at its disposal a much narrower economic margin for maneuver than the bourgeoisie in the imperialist countries. On the political arena, this is reflected by a general tendency to use the army to crush the mass movements by installing military dictatorships.

- While this general tendency does exist, it is equally necessary to keep in mind the full significance of exceptional prerevolutionary periods during which the mass movement can force the bourgeoisie to permit democratic openings, and during which decisive steps can be taken (by using all the opportunities made possible by legality) in building the revolutionary party and in organizing

the masses, including arming them.

● Since the only way the masses can prevent or defeat a military coup is by arming themselves in massive numbers and by organizing themselves into workers and peasants militias, one of the important tasks of revolutionaries is to prepare the masses for this by instilling in them a spirit in which self-defense becomes an automatic reflex.

● In Latin America more so than elsewhere, work within the army is a pressing and vital task: on this point there is no need for further comment.

Our fundamental difference with the IMT lies in the fact that we believe the problem of arming the working class is a problem of political leadership and therefore of rooting the revolutionary organization in the working class, which must be resolved by a whole system of transitional demands. It is only once we have become rooted and have gained the leadership of certain sectors of the mass movement that we will be able to take initiatives toward self-defense and armament. We will do it from within this movement and in its name; in this way its "exemplary" character will be that much greater.

We therefore refuse to throw our sections, which are still tiny minorities, into a "strategy of armed struggle" (now presented under the name of "forming autonomous detachments of the party having a minimum of practical application") under their own banner, because:

— Given the isolated character of such initiatives, this would lead to suicide and subject our sections to a selective repression that could frequently be avoided, since the initiatives of "armed struggle" are often not imposed by the objective necessities of the class struggle. This leads to guerrilla warfare, which can destroy our sections if it doesn't flow directly from the mass movement and therefore is not joined in by the masses.

— This line limits the implantation of our sections by cutting them off from all possibilities for legal or semi-legal work, by absorbing in practice all their forces in the military sector, and by subordinating the overall strategy, based on a transitional program, to a single tactic.

— This in turn jeopardizes the actual arming of the working class and the peasants, as well as jeopardizing armed struggle when it is imposed by the objective needs of the class struggle (furthermore, the tactical decisions concerning this—which are of vital importance—must be made by the sections and not in a "strategic" document on a "continental scale").

Finally, the IMT's failure to respond to the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction's criticisms of the Bolivian section (which under Torres called on the soldiers to desert individually in order to join a nonexistent revolutionary army) leads us to suspect that there may be some differences here as well.

II. The Document on Building Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe

(1) *On the Nature of the Document*

We believe it is possible to write a document on Europe that analyzes the broad outlines of its economic, social, and political evolution and draws some general conclusions from this; but it is impossible to deduce from such

an analysis—as the European document does—highly detailed forecasts for all the European countries and a few tactics that can be applied by all the European sections.

Here is our evaluation of the present period in Europe:

● There is no question but that Europe has witnessed a general upsurge of workers struggles since 1968, an upsurge that cannot fail to lead to class confrontations of an even harsher character, inasmuch as the inter-imperialist rivalry is growing sharper and the economic situation is deteriorating.

● Having said that, and while the possibility for a revolutionary crisis may exist in some countries, the European document puts far too little emphasis on the different rhythms of development of the class struggle in the European countries and offers an insufficient analysis of the way in which the reformist workers parties can act as a brake in a period in which a premature upsurge occurs in the class struggle.

● By virtue of the fact that it's so vague, the European document can in this respect give rise to an exaggerated optimism by very quickly and very superficially linking together the economic crisis, the political crisis of the bourgeoisie, the crisis of reformism, and the revolutionary crisis; this is done without analyzing, for example, what could happen in France if one day the Union of the Left replaces the UDR [Gaullists]—which is in fact in a state of crisis—as the bourgeoisie's solution.

● All this is possible because the IMT remains very vague insofar as its prognosis for Europe as a whole is concerned. We have already heard contradictory statements about the four-to-five-years question. In his reply to Comrade Waters, Pierre Frank seems to say—in a sentence that's vague enough to be called elliptical in a few years—that the perspective in Europe is for the generalization of revolutionary crises throughout the continent:

"It is true that in certain circumstances it is not easy to formulate a perspective and that one can only envision various possible variants. We do not think this to be the case at present for Europe." [*IIDB*, Vol. 10, No. 14, August 1973, "Two Ways of Constructing the Revolutionary Marxist Party and Engaging It in Action," p. 6.]

We refuse to accept the notion that the generalization of revolutionary crises throughout all Europe is either a certainty or the sole variant upon which we must base the entire activity of our sections in every country. This generalization of crises is only a possibility; the political line must be elaborated by analyzing—in the more general context we spoke of at the beginning of this section—the evolution of the economic, social, and political situation in each country.

(2) '*The Vanguard of a Mass Character*'

The European document accords great importance to what is called the "vanguard of a mass character," and defines "winning hegemony within this vanguard" as the present tactic (out of three possible tactics) for building the party.

First, it must be emphasized that when we speak of a revolutionary organization that is still quite small winning over a vanguard, we are speaking of a goal and not a tactic. In the period of the tactic of entryism (which lasted fifteen years, and whose characterization as a "tac-

tic" can be called into question—above and beyond any consideration of whether or not it was effective) the goal was to win over the vanguard that was supposedly developing in the Social-Democratic and Stalinist organizations. The fact that at present a "vanguard of a mass character" has in large part escaped the control of these organizations and is to be found outside them does not make this goal (winning hegemony) into a tactic.

But this is not the most important thing. What is more important is the fact that the notion of a "vanguard of a mass character" tends to make the elaboration of a precise political line more difficult instead of easier. The reason is that this notion seeks to include elements as sociologically far-removed from one another as the radicalized student youth and the radicalized workers; it also includes such politically disparate elements as Trotskyists, Maoists, and those who belong to no organized group. We will see later on that these distinctions—which the notion of a "vanguard of a mass character" tends to obscure—are important for the elaboration of a political line.

Our opinion on this "vanguard of a mass character" is the following:

—We agree that it represents an important factor for building revolutionary parties, and that these radicalized youth and radicalized workers are an "operative factor" that permit us to demonstrate in practice the value of our program and our methods of action.

—But while it's necessary to understand the power this "vanguard" has for taking tactical initiatives, it's equally necessary to understand its weaknesses insofar as working toward our strategic objective is concerned, that is, winning over the majority of the working class. And here is where it's necessary to take into account all the social and political differences we mentioned: It's possible to hold demonstrations and occupy universities with the Maoists, but it's much more difficult if not impossible to work in the trade unions with them, or even to intervene in a reformist demonstration. It's easier to carry out trade-union work with unorganized workers than to carry out work oriented to trade-union militants with unorganized radicalized students, etc.

(3) *Overlooking the Strategic Task*

We believe that the European document devotes too little attention precisely to our strategic task (winning the leadership of the working class); there is a vast gulf between the present and a situation of dual power. Comrades who ask, "How should we carry out our work in the trade unions?" or "What are the principles on which the platform of a trade-union tendency ought to be based?" or "Do we need a fighting program for the sections? If so, what questions should be included in it?" will find very few answers in the European document. Apart from workers control, it contains very few transitional demands. The other key demand—for a workers government—is treated very superficially, though in the period ahead it can become very important for several sections (in countries where the class struggle will tend to pose the question of power).

All this threatens to lead to substituting a single slogan—workers control—for the Transitional Program, and to adopting a rather spontaneist view of building the

revolutionary party (something along the lines of "Build through tactical initiatives in the 'vanguard of a mass character'; we will build the party when there is a situation of dual power.").

And here we would like to make a remark that to us seems very important. It is clear that this danger would be very real if the European document were strictly applied in elaborating the line of the sections. We hope that many of the sections will recognize—consciously or not—all the limitations of the document in this respect and pay no attention to it in elaborating their line. In our opinion, this is what was done in the "Balance Sheet and Perspectives" document prepared for the Second Congress of the LRT. It's enough just to see all the emphasis that was placed on the "emergence" of a Trade-Union Left (compare, for example, the first two pages of the document—which summarize the European document, and in which nothing is said about trade-union work—with all the rest).

(4) *The Strategic Task and the 'Vanguard of a Mass Character'*

The fact that the European document has so little to say about our strategic task seems all the more serious to us because we believe that our intervention among radicalized youth (both student and worker) and in the working-class vanguard must be carried out within the more general framework of our strategic task.

With this in mind, we reject the theory of building the party in two stages (today the vanguard, tomorrow the masses), a concept now openly affirmed by the IMT.

It is clear that because of the very nature of our organizations and because of their type of activity, we will first win a vanguard. But this vanguard must be won by proving that we have the best program, the best strategy, and the best tactics for winning the masses and for leading struggles to victory. These are the questions on which the "vanguard of a mass character" is divided. The vanguard must be won by systematically educating it about its links to the masses, otherwise it will be a powerless "vanguard" that doesn't even merit the name (all the more reason not to refer from the outset to our primary arenas of intervention as vanguards). This has been, for example, the whole thrust of the discussion with the Maoists on trade-union work.

Lacking this approach to these radicalized young people and workers, we will fall into one that is purely "tactical" (seeing them as separated from the masses). We run the risk of becoming blind to the limitations of the radicalized youth—whom we don't control directly—and risk gradually adapting to them.

This leads to the following errors:

—A propagandistic approach to the class struggle, which is abstract except for rather restricted politicized milieus, and which neglects the immediate tasks. One example is the recent election campaign of the ex-Ligue Communiste, which was based almost exclusively on explaining "There is no peaceful road to socialism," without campaigning for the transitional demands that necessarily constitute the steps toward the dictatorship of the proletariat. This propagandistic approach—which by definition can only influence a limited vanguard and fails to

educate it as to its task of winning the leadership of the working class through the Transitional Program — is called the "line of building the organization" (in its first stage, no doubt!).

—A very clear adaptation to ultraleftism, represented by the fact that the European document on the one hand totally neglects support to the Irish revolution, and on the other hand refuses to recognize the vital importance of the withdrawal of British troops and of building a mass movement around this theme in Europe. All this is an indirect consequence of the fact that many ultra-left organizations have never understood the importance of the struggle in Ireland because of their failure to understand the national question and the process of permanent revolution. It is also an indirect consequence of the fact that there is a tendency to define the priorities for our work in accordance with the "concerns" of the "vanguard of a mass character" (which frequently has ultralefts as spokespersons) instead of in accordance with the objective needs of the class struggle.

We disagree on this point with Comrade Pierre Frank when he tends to treat the "concerns of the vanguard" and the needs of the masses as though they were the same thing:

"Let's move to the reproach that is made of our orienting ourselves to the 'concerns' of the vanguard in opposition to the needs of the masses. We have never created such a counterposition for the simple reason that the 'concerns' of the vanguard are the needs of the masses. For a very simple reason. The 'radicalization' in Europe, in contrast to that in the United States, is a powerful revolutionary rise of the working class." [Pierre Frank: *IIDB*, Vol. 10, No. 14, p. 10.]

While it is incontestably true that a great number of students want very much to intervene in workers struggles, and that this represents a progressive step on their part, Comrade Frank still hasn't replied to Comrade Waters's objection — that our orientation toward these "concerns of the vanguard" led us to drop our Vietnam work almost completely and for a whole period (1969-70), in flagrant contradiction with the objective needs of the masses and the class struggle. What does Comrade Frank have to say about the fact that orientation toward the "concerns of the vanguard" led to errors in our Irish work, errors in flagrant contradiction with the needs of the class struggle.

Furthermore, he seems to draw far too simplistic a conclusion from the situation: in Europe, the concerns of the vanguard — the needs of the masses.

(5) *Our Chile work*

We would like to give one last proof of the fact that there is a growing tendency to neglect the objective necessities of the class struggle in favor of revolutionary propaganda responding to the "concerns of the vanguard."

We think our Chile work was correctly directed in its broad outlines. The platform of the front was correct (against the junta; support to the resistance; defense of the organizations of the Chilean people; defense of the political prisoners and of their right to exile; and breaking off all diplomatic and other relations). But there were some errors of a more or less technical nature: the head-

line of the first issue of *La Gauche* ("The Failure of reformism" instead of "Down with the coup" or "Defend the Chilean workers movement"); the poor balance between the banners (those of the front didn't stand out enough), something that was also true of the slogans, which distorted the character of the demonstration (transforming it into a "revolutionary" demonstration, with the Maoists chanting "Power comes from the barrel of a gun" and us chanting "The only solution is revolution"). All this was in contradiction with the decision of the Political Bureau, which had decided that our Chile work and the demonstration in particular ought to be of a character such that no workers organization would be excluded.

Thus the errors involved weren't too serious, reflecting perhaps a certain ultraleft current in the organization, something the leadership could have easily corrected through an educational intervention.

But we've seen just the opposite happen. When Comrade Pierre [Le Grève] and two former leaders of the Belgian section wrote an "Open Letter" to *La Gauche* attacking some of these errors, the majority of the Political Bureau set out to justify them!!!! So far as the slogan "The only solution is revolution" goes, we read the following:

"One last word: revolutionary action must be carried out within the working masses. The workers movement organized in the traditional organizations constitutes an important part of the working masses, a part that is without doubt essential in certain respects, especially insofar as the trade unions are concerned. But it doesn't encompass all the masses — the youth in particular. It doesn't even include all the masses that formally belong to it; if this weren't the case, it would be impossible to explain a good part of the movements mentioned above (Claes-Hurez [the campaign against the government's attempt to reduce the number of students by increasing university tuition and instituting state examinations], VdB [the campaign against the Van den Boeynants proposal for strengthening the army and the national police], and the longshore strike . . .). They were initiated against the wishes of the traditional leaderships. We don't have the impression that the LRT was isolated in relation to these mass mobilizations — quite the contrary" [*La Gauche*, October 5, 1973. For full text of letter and response, see appendix].

The statement is indisputably true. But does this fact give us a blank check to hold demonstrations centered around revolutionary propaganda whenever we think that mass mobilizations are impossible at a given moment (which, in the case of Chile, is open to discussion)? To say that it does is really to fail to understand that the objective needs of the Chilean class struggle require a massive mobilization. And this is a function, among other things, of the slogans which the initial nuclei, the most conscious elements, put forward in the movement. It's true that it's impossible to comprehend this if one views the "vanguard of a mass character" separately and independently of its strategic task. . . .

(6) *How Do They Want to Win Hegemony?*

As we have said, "winning hegemony in the vanguard of a mass character" is a goal and not a tactic. To evaluate the line proposed by the IMT it's necessary to take up the few genuine tactics they put forward for attaining this goal.

They're difficult to find in the document, but here are a couple:

(a) The national campaigns and their "concerns of the vanguard," which we have already said enough about.

(b) "Exemplary actions" and "minority violence." First of all, we find this term just as confusing as terms like "armed struggle" (which covers such totally different actions as the armed struggle led by Hugo Blanco and the Sallustro kidnapping) and "vanguard of a mass character." For the IMT, building the antiwar movement in the United States was an "exemplary" action, but then so was the "cocktail party" at the Argentine Embassy in Paris at the time of the Trelew massacre.

We state at the outset that we support "exemplary actions" like Lip or Glaverbel-Gilly, etc., and that we have always believed it was correct to set the "example" in 1965 by marching in the streets with a few dozen Trotskyists to demand the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam, and to do that on the basis of slogans that would mobilize the masses later on. We are not even opposed to "spectacular extra-legal actions" like those carried out the week before Brazil Export, when they are carried out in direct relation to and as a function of a mass mobilization.

On the other hand, we are in total disagreement with what Comrade Frank has written on "minority violence" considered as an "exemplary action":

"Alas, the working class cannot by itself, without a vanguard, learn revolutionary politics, especially as pertains to the use of organized, structured violence. The revolutionary party cannot teach it this simply through propaganda. It is a task in which the revolutionary party must also serve as an example, sometimes paying dearly." [Pierre Frank: *IIDB* Vol. 10, No. 14, p. 10.]

At the December 1972 International Executive Committee meeting the same comrade explained that "in France, a Molotov cocktail is nothing." Now, however, it seems that Molotov cocktails are supposed to educate the working class about revolutionary violence! This comrade's position has evolved in a rather strange way.

We believe that the working class will reach a higher stage of consciousness through its own experience—not by serving as spectators at "exemplary actions" of "minority violence" by a few Trotskyists!

(c) Unity in action—outflanking. When you take into consideration the political components that participate in this, it boils down to unity in action with the other organizations that are characterized as "ultraleft."

It is clear that we must seek this unity in action, which is especially important inasmuch as it gives the radicalized youth their "operative" character; otherwise we would fall into capitulation of the Lambertist variety (launching futile appeals to the workers parties to take initiatives while doing nothing ourselves).

We repeat, however, that the demonstrations, etc., we hold with the other far-left organizations must be seen as tactical operations within the framework of our strategic task. The platform on which this common work is carried out and the tactical course we follow must take the following considerations as their starting point:

— They must correspond to the objective needs of the class struggle.

— They must take into account the attitudes of the masses who are under the control of the reformists, even if they don't participate. We must above all avoid the reaction: "There aren't very many here; apart from us there's only the Maoists. Let's put forward our maximum program — 'The only solution is revolution.'"

Unity in action and united fronts with other organizations must therefore always seek to involve the other workers organizations (the CP, the Social Democrats, the trade-union sectors) and their rank and file, once the objective basis for this exists. These fronts must be seen under the long-term perspective of unifying the working class around transitional demands.

(7) *Conclusion on Europe*

We believe that our differences with the IMT on the European document are too important to continue supporting it. It is regrettable that an alternative—one quite different, including on the methodological plane—will not be ready for the world congress, but we think that the discussion that has now begun in Europe will lead to that in the longer run. We have the firm intention of participating in this discussion.

III. The Same Methodological Errors in Both the European Document and the Ninth World Congress 'Draft Resolution on Latin America'

This error consists in taking the general tendency for a continent and making it into an immediate perspective for every country instead of taking it as a framework for analyzing the different rhythms of the development of the class struggle in the different countries and the influence of victories or defeats on the continent as a whole.

After the Ninth World Congress, the IMT comrades wrote, for example, that Latin America had entered a phase of civil war on a continental scale.

So far as Europe is concerned, Comrade Frank believes there is only one possible variant . . . and accuses Comrade Waters of seeing the generalization of revolutionary crises in all the countries as only a possibility!

The consequence of this is that you tend to impose a series of tactics on all the European sections (such as guerrilla warfare in Latin America), a series of tactics that then both replaces and contradicts building a revolutionary party on the basis of the method of the Transitional Program.

IV. How Should the Fourth International Be Built?

It is clear that the majority of the leadership of the Fourth International has adapted to guerrillaist and Castroist concepts on the question of Latin America. Guerrilla warfare—a tactic—has become the substitute for a program and an (illusory) shortcut for building the party.

We do not wish to take a position here on the nature of the Vietnamese CP, but there cannot be any question about the fact that the IMT overestimated the "cease-fire victory." Adaptations have been made that are inexcusable

even if one considers the Vietnamese CP to be a centrist party.

Insofar as Europe is concerned, it is incontestable that there is a danger of adaptation to the ultraleftism of the radicalized youth (Jebracq's general outlook in France, Pierre Frank's theories on "minority violence," the theoretical justification of the errors in the Chile work in Belgium).

The most distressing thing about all this is the fact that the majority in the leadership of the International does not seem to be conscious of the danger, despite the sour experience with the PRT. They are even vaguely theorizing about this question (Comrade Germain's question at our cadre school: "Is the basis of our movement programmatic or ideological?").

We believe that a genuine, mass International can only be built on the overall theoretical heritage of Trotskyism, and that building such an International requires a leadership (on a national and international scale) that rigorously applies the method of scientific socialism, a method that today is upheld solely by the Trotskyist movement. We strongly reaffirm this point which should be common ground for everyone, because the IMT remains very vague and confused in this regard after its experience with a "flexible" attitude toward the PRT.

V. Call for Building a Tendency

On the basis of our document, we call for building a

tendency in the Belgian section in support of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction on the essential questions.

Our tendency is constituted solely for the LRT congress in preparation for the world congress, and not for the national congress. The reason for this is that we do not feel that the "Balance Sheet and Perspectives" document represents a transplantation of the European document into Belgium. While we do believe that there are several points that require discussion in the LRT (such as the Chile work, for example), we do not think that the formation of a tendency is necessary for resolving these problems, and we will participate in the discussion as individuals.

The conditions for joining "THE TENDENCY in Support of the LTF on the Essential Questions" are:

(1) Membership in the LRT, and thus recognition of the discipline of the LRT within the context of democratic centralism;

(2) Agreement with the general line of our call for building a tendency;

(3) Notification of all appropriate bodies in the organization (cell, local executive, Central Committee, Political Bureau) of one's membership in the tendency as soon as one has joined.

The initial signers of this call are:

Frans (Gand), Henriette (Gand), Leon (Gand), Marcel (Central Committee, Political Bureau, Brussels), Sylvia (Gand).

APPENDIX: An Open Letter to *La Gauche* and the Editor's Reply

[The following letter and reply by the editor are translated from the October 5, 1973 issue of *La Gauche*, the French-language organ of the Belgian section of the Fourth International. The exchange was also printed in Internal Bulletin No. 5 of the Belgian section. The internal version of the letter was signed by a third person, Comrade Pierre LeGrève who is a prominent public figure of the Belgian section. The other two signers, both former leaders of the section, are now sympathizers.]

* * *

An Open Letter from Two Comrades

We think it has become absolutely necessary for us to take a stand against the ultra-sectarian line the LRT is putting forward in *La Gauche* as well as in the public positions taken by LRT leaders.

In its September 14 issue—that is, three days after the putsch in Chile—*La Gauche* headlined its front-page editorial with a shout of victory: "Chile—the bankruptcy of reformism." What would our comrades have thought if at the time of Che Guevara's assassination, the CP paper had been headlined "Bankruptcy of armed struggle in Latin America. . . ."?

For us, for revolutionary Marxists, the military coup in Chile represents above all a great defeat in one of the

sectors of the world revolution, a defeat that will not fail to have repercussions in Latin America as well as in the world as a whole. Shouldn't the first question posed about Chile be how we can aid the Chilean workers in struggle? For the LRT and *La Gauche*, it seems that what is of prime importance today is to shout "We told you so!" As if this proclamation by itself could have unveiled for the masses in one flash the nature of the Chilean regime of yesterday.

The situation in Chile permits raising a number of fundamental questions concerning the problems of revolution. We believe that the ripening of the revolutionary process comes about through setting the mass movement in motion. The conditions exist for confronting the socialist parties and the international trade-union movement with their responsibilities, and thus promoting a relative radicalization of the sort that set the workers movement in motion during the war in Spain. In the course of this process, it would be possible to pose before larger and larger circles the question of the future of reformism, of popular fronts, and of the peaceful road to socialism.

To this political strategy, it has been preferred to counterpose ready-made maxims suitable for developing a sense of self-satisfaction in the organization, despite the fact that they block all possibilities for promoting the rising consciousness that incontestably exists on these questions today.

At a meeting organized by the Europe-Latin America Committee and supported by numerous organizations, the LRT proclaimed from the speakers' platform that its predictions had been verified, and from the rear of the hall it shouted the slogan "The Only Solution is Revolution." Likewise, during the September 22 demonstration this same slogan was initiated or taken up by comrades on the Political Bureau as we marched through the working-class sections of Brussels. Since then we have wondered if the Transitional Program has been definitively shelved, along with the entire strategy that flows from it, based on a thorough analysis of the situation in our own country as well as in Chile and Argentina. As for us, unfortunately we don't think that we are on the eve of the world revolution, and we therefore believe that the Transitional Program still retains its full reason for existence. The LRT's attitude thus seems to us to stem from ultraleft adventurism.

We think it is high time for the LRT to reexamine its positions. We believe it is absolutely necessary to continue this line of discussion if we are to avoid total isolation in relation to the workers movement in general, the arena where revolutionary action must be carried out.

September 23, 1973

Marc Clause
Nicole Gérard

A Reply

The letter from Comrades Marc Clause and Nicole Gérard is based on a confusion between two types of activity carried out by revolutionary organizations. When there is a possibility for mass movements arising from workers' legitimate aspirations—economic or political—that the government is unwilling or unable to satisfy, revolutionaries intervene on the basis of anticapitalist demands that allow for the most effective and best organized struggle. They do this so that through this combat the masses will become conscious—by means of their own experience—of the necessity for overthrowing capitalism.

This is the way in which interventions were carried out by individual members of the LRT, by the LRT as an organization, and by its newspapers *La Gauche* and *Rood* in all of this year's mass struggles: the Caterpillar strike, the dockers strike at Gand and Antwerp, the strikes at Brassico, FN and Cockerill-Ougree; the agitation by the teachers; the anti-VdB movement; the students actions against the Claes-Hurez measures; the actions by the high school students, the agitation against the army—to cite just a few of the most important examples. It would be difficult to maintain that we have acted in a "sectarian" manner, or on the basis of "ultraleft adventurism in these struggles." Nor have we shouted during them that "The Only Solution is Revolution."

But *revolutionary propaganda based on the entire communist program* is something different from intervention among the masses of working people and the youth. This sort of propaganda is a permanent duty of revolutionary Marxists, especially when historical events like the tragic defeat in Chile compel advanced workers and militants to reflect over fundamental political questions. At the time of the putsch in Chile it was not yet possible to launch strikes

or huge mass movements on the basis of anticapitalist objectives. On the other hand, it was necessary to respond to the uncertainties and the demands for explanations echoing among vanguard militants. This is what *La Gauche* did. This is what the LRT did.

In this respect, they were following the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky. When historical tragedies such as the outbreak of the first imperialist war or Hitler and Franco's coming to power occurred, they hardly remained content with calling for aid to the victims or with exposing the crimes of capitalism and imperialism. They implacably denounced (including in the headlines of their articles) the overwhelming responsibility of the reformist organizations (and later, reformist and Stalinist organizations), whose senseless political line had promoted or facilitated these disasters.

They can hardly be said to have acted in this way out of sectarianism or "ultraleft adventurism," but rather because in the face of serious defeats the first duty is to tell the entire truth, to hide nothing from the masses. Otherwise, it is impossible to make the necessary corrections. This too is stated in the Transitional Program of the Fourth International.

When confronted with the Chilean tragedy, our duty was the same. Comrades Clause and Gérard are perfectly free to view our headline "Chile—the bankruptcy of reformism" as a "shout of victory." This simply proves an astonishing lack of revolutionary sensitivity on the part of two exemplary militants like the signers of this letter. No, dear comrades, this was not a "shout of victory." It was a shout of anger and sadness. The Chilean proletariat, one of the most combative and admirable since the Spanish proletariat of the 1930s, was led into a bloody trap by blind leaders. They are now paying with 20,000 dead and innumerable sufferings for the folly of their leaders, who up to the very end maintained their confidence in the "Chilean army's loyalty to the constitution," and in the "peaceful road to socialism." To state this truth is not simply a moral task, although the act of not remaining silent over who is responsible in such crushing defeats is also a moral duty in respect to the proletariat. But it is above all a political task. The liberal bourgeoisie (see *Le Monde*, day after day) and the most cynical wing of the reformists are already hastening to explain to workers that the defeat in Chile was inevitable. The bourgeois army is supposedly all powerful in the West. The only choice, they say, is to reconcile yourself to this or be crushed. It almost seems as though the Chilean proletariat was defeated precisely because of their excessive combativity. The "ultralefts" with their "extremism" are supposed to have forced the army to intervene.

The moral of the story, according to them, is: demobilize, otherwise they'll get you like they did in Chile. The extreme right is there to complete the picture, scrawling on the walls "Long Live the Nation—in Europe as in Chile. Here Too Fascism Will Triumph. . . ."

Defeats, especially unexplained defeats, sow confusion and demoralization among the masses. If the Fourth International, if revolutionaries as a whole do not explain the reasons and the responsibilities for the defeat, if they don't explain *that it could have been avoided and how it could have been avoided*, if they don't explain that the counterrevolutionary army can and must be defeated,

they become the accomplices of those who are calling for demobilization and those who are sowing demoralization. We are in complete agreement with Comrades Clause and Gérard when they say that a task of immediate aid is imposed in regard to the Chilean proletariat. Unfortunately, the moral aid provided by our demonstrations carries very little weight—on this question just ask the German workers about the aid provided them by the Platonic antifascist demonstrations after 1933. Active material aid will be the most effective, and we will certainly not remain in the background in this respect. We will participate in every demonstration of solidarity with Chile. We will support, we have taken, and we will take the necessary initiatives so that the demonstrations of solidarity and aid will take place on the broadest possible united-front basis of all who claim to be part of the workers movement. For this reason, within the Support Committee for the Chilean People in Struggle, the LRT has fought for a minimal political platform that would permit all the workers organizations to maintain their own political identity, while attaining the broadest unity in action. This attempt failed because the Communist Party sought to make all the organizations swallow its position of *political* support to the Popular Unity coalition. Which is obviously totally unacceptable. It's the *right-wing sectarianism of the CP*, not the "ultraleftism" of the LRT, that is the source of the present divisions. The LRT continues to invite all the organizations to attain unity in action around a minimal basis of solidarity (down with the putsch, defense of all Chilean organizations, no recognition to the military regime). The CP has the opportunity to struggle in complete freedom for its own positions, including "Long Live Popular Unity."

Thus we will not keep our revolutionary propaganda secret. We will not pass over in silence the responsibilities of the reformist and Stalinist leaders who were crushed. Perhaps this won't be popular in circles around the leaders of these organizations. But then the denunciations of the imperialist war, of the Moscow trials, or even of the counterrevolutionary Algerian war carried out by the Guy Mollet government (Socialist Party), supported by the French CP's vote for military loans, weren't very popular in those circles either.

As for socialist, communist, and trade-union militants who are thinking the matter over, they are paying attention to our arguments. The various debates that are taking place almost everywhere across the country attest to that. And this is what we seek to attain: that these militants reflect on the lesson of Chile. But to accomplish this, it's necessary to explain these lessons, without beating around the bush about whoever is involved.

One last word: revolutionary action must be carried out within the working masses. The workers movement organized in the traditional organizations constitutes an important part of the working masses, a part that is without doubt essential in certain respects, especially insofar as the trade unions are concerned. But it doesn't encompass all the masses—the youth in particular. It doesn't even include all the masses that formally belong to it; if this weren't the case, it would be impossible to explain a good part of the movements mentioned above. They were initiated against the wishes of the traditional leaderships. We don't have the impression that the LRT was isolated in relation to these mass mobilizations—quite the contrary.

Declaration of the Compass Tendency

[The following declaration has been translated from the internal discussion in the Gruppe Internationale Marxisten (GIM—International Marxist Group), German section of the Fourth International. The Compass Tendency has submitted two documents to the International Internal Discussion Bulletin: "On Latin America: The Orientation of the Fourth International" (IIDB, Vol. 10, No. 22) and "Draft for Revision of the European Perspectives Document: 'The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe'" (IIDB, Vol. 10, No. 25).

* * *

Democratic centralism, the Leninist principle of organization, which the GIM subscribes to as the German section of the Fourth International, is based on the guarantee of the right to form tendencies and factions within the organization on a definite political basis while preserving unity in action and defending the position of the majority in public. It is clear that without this guarantee democratic centralism cannot function at all.

This does not mean that the existence of tendencies or factions is in itself advantageous for the organization. Even when the discipline of the organization is maintained, of necessity tendency struggles absorb the energies of the organization and hinder its practical effectiveness. For this reason, the objective set by a tendency formation cannot be to change the majority-minority relationship within the group. Rather this change must, in the final analysis, be the result of a confirmation or refutation of alternative political conceptions thus leading to an end to the tendency struggle and the creation of a new unity within the organization.

Above all, this process is dependent on how the organization relates to the class struggle. If the organization does this in such a way that it is impossible to sufficiently test the line in practice, tendency formations must inevitably become distorted; this in turn harbors the danger of an unwarranted hardening of the tendency, the inability of the tendency to dissolve itself, and even a split. Therefore every tendency in a living revolutionary organization has to be ready to put its line to the test in practice, recognize the results of this test, and positively or negatively evaluate its experience as a tendency on this basis.

The absence of declared tendencies in the GIM in the past was a deficiency because there were clearly fundamental oppositional currents in disagreement with the majority, but which never based themselves on a principled political program and therefore remained totally diffuse. This contributed to the fact that the GIM majority, which united against these unprincipled opposition groupings, also re-

mained politically diffuse.

It was only the process of differentiation in this politically ill-defined majority, a process that began in the spring of this year, which led to the formation of defined tendencies in the GIM.

The manner in which these tendencies were formed gives a revealing picture of the GIM itself. Neither the tendency close to the IMT [International Majority Tendency] nor the tendency close to the LTT [Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency] grew out of the living process of discussion, experience, and formation of points of view inside the GIM. Rather they resulted from international impulses and agreements within narrow circles. In form they were established openly in the organization and the internal bulletin. In substance, however, they were established behind the backs of the organization as a whole.

As justification for the formation of an additional tendency we have only the compulsion we are under and our conviction that the positions so far developed by these tendencies are not adequate to arm the organization with a correct line. In contrast, we believe that the line we advance can move the organization a step forward in the present period. Our method is not one of factionally replying to the positions of the other tendencies, but of deriving a line for the organization from the changes in the relationship between the classes and the development of the class struggle, and of determining our perspectives from this and not from the "requirements of the factional struggle."

Thus the door is wide open for the other tendencies to join us in bringing about a unifying clarification of the line and the tasks of the GIM. Thus, for us the formation of a tendency is only a tool, a means for an end: like *compass* it is intended to help chart the correct course for the GIM.

We are of the opinion that in West Germany we are entering into a period where the initial foundations are being laid for a reconstruction of the workers movement. This reconstruction is taking place under conditions that put the Transitional Program and its method in a position of immediate relevance. We believe that development of class consciousness among the workers in accordance with the transitional strategy offers the only solution for the working class—not just in the historical sense but in the immediate sense as well. We believe that there is no existing force that can—even to the slightest degree—relieve us of the task of systematically developing this transitional strategy, and that therefore it is impermissible for revolutionary Marxists to postpone this task in favor of other "opportunities" and "possibilities," thereby watching the current phase of reconstruction in the workers movement run into one of its historical dead ends.

Therefore we believe that in the light of a concrete analysis of the development of the class struggle and the class consciousness of the West German proletariat, a comprehensive new orientation for our work is necessary.

Proceeding from this general framework, we have established the following points as the provisional platform of our tendency:

1. A reorientation of the GIM along the general lines indicated in Karl's draft resolution "Perspectives for our Work" on the basis of which Compass will extend and further develop its line.

2. A recognition of the necessity of an alternative reworking of those sections of the European document that, in our opinion, present conclusions that are either false or so ambivalent that they can disorient the debate over a program of action for the individual European sections.

Affirmation that in our opinion the approval of the general line of the European document at the last convention was premature, that the correctness and high quality of the general analysis of the European document partially concealed from us serious gaps and unclear points in its conclusions.

The rejection of the IMT's conception of a "new mass vanguard," undefined in class-political terms, in which we must win hegemony. In place of this, recognition of the formation of a new workers vanguard in West Germany in the present period, and recognition that the discrepancy between it and the overwhelmingly student new force coming out of the youth radicalization in the federal Republic is so great that the two cannot be grouped together under the common designation of "vanguard" in any meaningful way.

Further, the clarification that this does not indicate any disdain for the possibilities of working among and recruiting radicalized youth.

3. The recognition that the various progressive mass movements in social sectors or around partial political questions cannot on their own attain their historical goals, which will only be realized with the overthrow of capitalism, that for this reason there is no separate road to these goals, but rather these movements are fundamentally dependent on the development of the class struggle arising from the contradiction between wage labor and capital.

4. For withdrawing the Ninth World Congress Latin America orientation, which calls for a guerrilla warfare

strategy, in favor of the general line of the declaration of twelve (later thirteen) members of the GIM leadership: "Why We Did Not Sign the Tendency Declaration of the International Majority" [IIDB Vol. X, No. 11, July 1973] or of Comrade Karew's document based on the declaration, as soon as this document becomes available to the whole organization.

5. The readiness to defend, on a principled basis, the unity of the International against the danger of a distortion of the present international dispute through a unwarranted sharpening of the tendency struggle and its acquiring an independent dynamic by the creation of unprincipled blocs or by narrowing of the democratic conduct of the debate and the decision-making process.

Anyone can become a member of the Compass Tendency who:

— belongs to the GIM, is in good standing, recognizes the discipline of the GIM and upholds its unity in action without reservation;

— agrees with the provisional platform of the Compass Tendency presented above, supports the work of the tendency inside the GIM, and takes a loyal attitude toward the tendency in questions that pertain to its positions.

Members of the Compass Tendency are those who:

— declare their adherence to the tendency and are confirmed as members by it;

— openly announce their adherence within the organization and inform the GIM leadership of their joining.

Gottingen

September 23, 1973

Albert (CC [Central Committee], PB [Political Bureau]); Heinz (Control Commission, Heidelberg); Juan (CC, Heidelberg); Karew (CC, Hamburg); Karl (CC, PB); Oliver (CC, Gottingen); Sigg (Hamburg); Werner (CC, Mannheim).

After its formation, the tendency elected a steering committee consisting of the following comrades: Albert, Juan, Karl.

The GIM internal correspondence address of the Compass Tendency is: Herbert Obenland, Nordenstrasse 30, 6 Frankfurt 1.

Motions Presented by the Compass Tendency

[The following statement was sent by the Compass Tendency to all groups and supporters of the GIM.]

* * *

Frankfurt, November 11, 1973

The following are the positions of the Compass tendency on the questions at issue at the Tenth World Congress (Fourth Since Reunification). They are presented for a vote in the branches of the GIM during the pre-world congress discussion period.

1. European Document

For the Compass draft resolution for changes in the European perspectives document as presented and motivated in *International Internal Discussion Bulletin* Vol. X, No. 25. For the necessity of deciding upon an EPD at the world congress as a general perspective for capitalist Europe. Against the position that no general perspectives document for capitalist Europe should be decided on.

2. Latin America Orientation

For the Compass tendency's draft resolution "On the Orientation of the Fourth International in Latin America" as presented in *IIDB* Vol. X, No. 22.

Against the draft resolution of the IEC Majority Tendency "On the Question of Armed Struggle in Latin America," *IIDB* Vol. X, No. 20.

This first-mentioned draft resolution summarizes the Compass tendency's position on the controversy over Latin America in the International. For this reason we are not submitting a separate document on Argentina and Bolivia, because, first of all, we believe that these points in the discussion are subordinated to the general orientation, and second of all, because we are not in a position, nor do we feel that it makes sense, to add our own views to the "battle of facts" over the Bolivian and Argentinian experience.

Therefore we are supporting the position on Argentina and Bolivia that is most acceptable to us.

3. Bolivia

For the analysis and evaluation of the Bolivian developments set forth in sections 1-7 and section 9, paragraphs 1-4 of the IEC Majority Tendency's draft resolution "Bolivia—Results and perspectives" (*IIDB* Vol. X, No. 6.)

Against the general line of this draft resolution "Bolivia—Results and Perspectives" since this is a reaffirmation and reinforcement of guerrilla orientation, which we regard as incorrect (on this point, see especially *IIDB*, Vol. X, No. 6, p. 11, sec. 12, paras. 5 and following.)

For the general line of Part II ("The Lessons of Bolivia")

of the IEC Minority Tendency draft resolution "Argentina and Bolivia—the Balance Sheet" (*IIDB* Vol. X, No. 1). If a vote is taken on anything beyond the general line of the text, we will abstain.

"The Lessons of Bolivia" unlike "Bolivia—Results and Perspectives" offers no thorough general analysis but basically limits itself to dealing with the orientation and practice of the POR (Combate). We agree with the assessment that the Latin America line of the Ninth World Congress led the POR to an incorrect orientation. However, there are a whole number of details in the discussion on the facts that are disputed. Moreover, in our opinion, a whole series of points such as the assessment of the Popular Assembly need more precise discussion, and above all, it seems to us that the document is overly limited to a critique of the POR (C) and contributes too little to the formulation of an alternative line, including a correct conception of military work. (On this point, c.f. section 3C of the Compass resolution in *IIDB* Vol. X, No. 22.) Therefore we will only vote for the general line.

4. Argentina

Against the IEC Majority Tendency draft resolution "Perspectives for the Revolutionary Struggle in Argentina." This resolution contains valuable elements of an analysis in its first ten sections, elements that can be adopted in a new overall document. However, in contrast to the Bolivia resolution of the IEC majority, this analysis is combined with attempts at justifying the incorrect orientation adopted in Argentina in such a way that we cannot vote for even part of it.

For the general line of "The Lesson of Argentina" (Part III of the draft resolution "Argentina and Bolivia—the Balance Sheet." If a vote is taken on the literal content of this document we will abstain.

A number of elements of general analysis are lacking in this draft resolution. In this respect the majority resolution is partially superior to it. However, in contrast to "The Lesson of Bolivia," "The Lesson of Argentina" contains a thorough analysis of the period treated (since 1969), an analysis we agree with in its broad outlines. This analysis has to do with the assessment of the development of the class struggle and the politics of the PRT/ERP. Once again the draft resolution is weak in its presentation of an alternative line, and once again it avoids going into the problems of party military work. Possibly the authors take as their point of departure the tacit assumption that the PST is the alternative and nothing more need be added. For these reasons, and once again because in a number of details the facts are contested (e.g., "How the ERP Flag Got on the Coffin")—only a vote for the general line.

5. Recognition of the PST as the Section

At the Ninth World Congress the PRT (Combatiente) was recognized as the section purely for reasons of numer-

ical size—because it was in the majority after the 1968 split. Comrade Maitan acknowledges this as the only possible criterion in such a case ("Let's Keep to the Issues, Let's Avoid Diversions!").

That is, if the then PRT (Verdad), the present PST, had been in the majority at that time, it would now be the section. In the meantime, the PRT (Combatiente), the PRT/ERP, has left the International. If we go back to the 1968 split and the criteria established then, nothing can stand in the way of recognizing the PST as the section. This is not a case of recognizing a completely *new* section—in such a case according to Comrade Maitan (*op. cit.*) the political criterion would be primary—rather it is a matter of recognizing an organization that was already recognized as a sympathizing group at the Ninth World Congress and was *not* recognized as the section solely for reasons of numerical size.

Up till now, we have been able to conduct only a few discussions with the comrades of the PST. Our impression is, however, that we have differences with the PST on a number of questions. One question is that of the parallel military apparatus. At the same time, we maintain that these differences are in no way larger or qualitatively distinguishable from differences we have with other sections—without our contesting their status as sections in any way. Therefore:

For the recognition of the PST, sympathizing group of the Fourth International, as the Argentine section of the Fourth International.

These five points of the platform of the Compass tendency in the GIM were unanimously agreed upon in the Compass tendency membership meeting in Frankfurt on October 27, 1973.

For a Process of Political Clarification in the GIM

A Contribution on Our Position in the International Discussion

The following is a declaration by supporters of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency in the Gruppe Internationale Marxisten (GIM—International Marxist Group), German section of the Fourth International.

* * *

I. Does the 'Bloc of the Twelve' have a Future?

The origin of the Block of the Twelve in the German section goes back to the tendency declaration of two leading comrades belonging to the international "majority." Twelve leading comrades felt obliged to explain to the organization why they considered this step incorrect [*IIDB*, Vol. 10, No. 11]. They had both organizational and political grounds.

From the organizational standpoint, they considered this declaration of tendency artificial and premature at a time when the organization as a whole had not had the slightest discussion, since it presented a completely uninformed membership with a political ultimatum. From the political standpoint, they considered the orientation toward rural guerrilla warfare for a prolonged period on a continental scale that was adopted at the Ninth Congress (Third Congress Since Reunification) to be analytically wrong and disastrous in its consequences. At the same time, they insisted on separating the methodology used in the Latin American discussion from that employed in the case of many other controversial issues, pointing out that there were a number of comrades who agreed with the so-called majority on these questions. The basis of this bloc was, thus, merely a common critical attitude toward the Latin American line of the majority at the last world congress. That there was no clear political agreement on other questions was shown when they tried to draw up a general statement (e.g., Karl's invitation to the sections for a meeting of the so-called third tendency and the reply of three comrades of the Block of the Twelve). It remains to be seen, therefore, what function a bloc founded on such a limited basis can have in the present situation.

To the extent that the preconditions for a genuine discussion in the organization as a whole are achieved, the organizational premises of the Bloc of the Twelve fade. Such a genuine discussion—it should be said—cannot be separated from the problems that our own section faces in the coming period. While it may be possible to separate out the Latin American question methodologically from some questions raised in the European document as well as many others, the formation of tendencies in the German section cannot be separated from such questions,

either as regards the approaching world congress or as regards the principal strategic tasks of our movement in the Federal Republic of Germany.

From this, it follows that the Bloc of the Twelve will have to either try to develop a viable political basis, which, as they take a clear position on the crucial questions facing the German section, will make them into a politically definable tendency, or reveal that they are too heterogeneous to form a coherent tendency. In the latter case, the function of this formation would be placed in doubt.

Comrade Karl's invitation to the sections for a meeting of a projected third tendency on September 8-9 seems to us to be an indication that there is little room for a common political basis. None of the points that were put forward to define the Bloc of the Twelve, to distinguish it on the one hand from the "majority," but above all from the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, had been discussed in this framework. In this letter Karl starts off from a consensus that does not in fact exist. He affirms the acceptance of the "general line" of the European draft document, whatever that is. He denies any connection between the method of the European document and that of the Ninth Congress document on Latin America. He endorses the "majority's" estimate of the development of the Indochinese revolution. He rejects all criticism of the Ligue's "antifascist struggle," and hails the past and present contributions of the international leadership, without any real explanation of what these contributions consist in. And he does all this in the name of the third tendency. The effect of this is to make the so-called third tendency without discussion, that is in a cold way, into a fellow traveler of the "majority."

So as to advance the process of clarification, we would like to put forward—in a very preliminary form—our position on some of the questions raised in this letter.

II. On the Connection Between the European Document and the Guerrilla Orientation in Latin America

Although the European document was not discussed in any way either before or after the Fourth National Congress, it was adopted in its general line as virtually a substitute for a program. Presumably it was just what was needed to cover over the political vacuum in which the section has so long existed and which was revealed so clearly in the attempt to develop an action program. In the meantime, we have already had an opportunity to learn empirically the weaknesses of this document. Above all we have seen revealed how little help it offers for practical work and for the development of a consistent

line.

In our opinion, the European document in many respects continues a bad tradition of the Fourth International that can be seen dating from the 1950s:

(a) It contains a doomsday view of development (decisive battles in four to five years; cf. startling similar expressions in the documents from 1951 onwards).

(b) It bases our orientation on conjunctural factors, a procedure that—as in the past period of entryism *sui generis*—leads to neglecting the development of independent mass work by the Trotskyist movement.

(c) It generalizes these conjunctural factors, making them the basis for characterizing the coming development and from this it directly derives the tactic to be followed.

(d) It doubts the possibility of building a combat party in the time allotted us and formulates substitutes.

In practice, the line that lies behind this leads to abandonment of our most important task—developing a program that would put us in a position to take the next step in building a combat party, that is, to develop a base among the most advanced workers.

a. The methodology on which the majority's Latin American document is based bears all of these distinguishing marks. The economic analysis in the document consists essentially of pulling together all those factors that demonstrate the impasse of development under the capitalist aegis. This part of the analysis is in substance indisputably correct. It is used, however, in the further development to demonstrate that the bourgeoisie can only maintain itself in power through constantly sharpening repression. This estimate does not leave room for reformist experiments or even modest democratic reforms; in fact it explicitly excludes them: ". . . the bourgeoisie cannot help but align itself on the side of imperialism . . . and is proving itself absolutely incapable of the least program of reforms." (IIDB reprints, *Discussion on Latin America* [1968-72], "Draft Resolution on Latin America," p. 5) This permanently sharpening repression leads up to a point where because of the explosiveness of the relationships and unbearable situation of the masses, a continental civil war will explode. In the opinion of the author such a situation already existed in 1969: "Thus not only in a historical sense but in a more direct and immediate one, Latin America has entered a period . . . of prolonged civil war on a continental scale." (*Ibid.*)

From this doomsday view of the relationships and the lines of development, the tactic of rural guerrilla warfare for all the sections on the continent was derived. When this estimate proved to be a snare and reformist regimes that made broad concessions to the masses were established in many countries, the first result was the confusion of our sections. It has been shown that the bourgeoisie need not by any means respond to the pressure of the masses only with heightened repression. In Bolivia for example it made concessions that are inconceivable in Europe at the present time. Our sections were bypassed. While in the cities the mass movement developed tumultuously, our sections continued to prepare for rural guerrilla warfare, which, after the "unavoidable" defeat, would, they thought, become the main form of struggle (Bolivia); or else they practiced urban guerrilla warfare and individual terrorism (Argentina). They left the leadership of the mass movement to the reformists and the Stalinists. They were obliged to do so because of their lack of roots

in the masses and the mass organizations did not put them in a position to play a leading role in this arena.

In the European document a doomsday view of the evolution is likewise derived from the economic situation of the continent and culminates in dogmatically setting the date of the "final struggle" in all countries in four to five years. (The German translation is at least prettified if not falsified at this point; "before the decisive battles are fought," that is "*bevor die entscheidenden Schlachten geschlagen werden*," is translated by "before the decisive struggles are initiated [*bevor die entscheidenden Kämpfe aufgenommen werden*"]. The French text was not available to us, but there is an errata sheet by Comrade Mandel for the English version in which no objection is made to this rendering.) This can only confuse our sections, especially when tactics are derived from it that are incompatible with our chief task, systematic and persistent work to root ourselves in the working class (see above). It is time to put an end to this "Third-Period Trotskyism."

b. The conjunctural factor that the European document makes into the axis and pivot for deriving our present tactic is the appearance of a so-called "new mass vanguard." Our line must therefore be designed "to win hegemony within the new mass vanguard. . . ." (*International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 10, No. 5, p. 13.) From this it follows inevitably that we must orient ourselves to the ultraleft milieu. The document confirms this, setting as one of the few concrete tasks it projects: "organizing national political campaigns on carefully chosen issues that correspond to the concerns of the vanguard, do not run against the current of mass struggles (!), and offer a chance for demonstrating a capacity for effective initiative. . . ." (*IIDB*, Vol. 9, No. 5, p. 24.) (Once again the German translation prettifies things: "organizing national political campaigns on carefully chosen issues that correspond to the needs of the vanguard. . ." is rendered ". . . die den Bedurfnissen der Avantgarde entgegenkommen. . ." [*which converge with the needs of the vanguard*]).

When you see how the term "vanguard" is used in the European document, in what connections it appears and what qualities and tasks are attributed to this glittering phenomenon, you have to question the term. Are we basing ourselves on the meaning this word originally had in the revolutionary workers movement, where it meant that part of the working class that most clearly formulated the class interest and remained a continuous factor through the ups and downs of the class struggle? In the full sense this applies only to the revolutionary party; in a limited sense it could be applied to the embryonic forms of such a party, insofar, by extension, they are capable already of fulfilling these tasks.

A "mass vanguard" or a "vanguard with mass character" is obviously something different. That is why it is given the attribute "new." In fact the characterizations that are made of it suggest that something completely different is meant:

"Because of its very origins, the new mass vanguard harbors within it numerous elements with a petty-bourgeois consciousness and ideology who, depending on the circumstances and the relationship of forces [of the vanguard?] with the revolutionary Marxist organization, can at best play a secondary role in the unfolding of the struggles, or at worst profoundly distort and pervert the forms

and the results of these struggles. . . . Some of the participants in this vanguard, who remain prisoners of spontaneism, sectarianism, ultraleft infantilism, apolitical work-erism, or primitive syndicalism, will never travel this distance [to the socialist revolution]." (*IIDB*, Vol. 9, No. 5, p. 13.)

This is really a strange kind of "vanguard"! It has nothing in common with the Leninist term. Rather, the potential that figured earlier in our writings under the title "youth radicalization" has been transformed in the European document into the "new mass vanguard." This metamorphosis suggests in any case the following questions: Has the "youth radicalization" now become the "vanguard of the working class"? Or does the working class have its own vanguard, as other sections of the document suggest? (cf. p. 14, where it says, "violent skirmishes between part of the working class and its vanguard, on the one hand, and bourgeois society, on the other"; cf. also the category of the advanced workers.) If the second is true, what is the radicalized youth the vanguard of? Has our movement been assigned the role of the vanguard of the vanguard? The logic of this statement bears strange fruit. It is extremely hard in this pyramiding of vanguards to keep a clear view on the essential thing, on our main task. This is by no means playing with definitions or terms. The heart of the political difference lies in the following sentence. Do we regard it as our task to make a socialist combat program, based on the Transitional Program, the program of the class, or is this the task of the "new mass vanguard" (whose political character was so aptly presented in the quotation above), while we play the role of its mentor, in order to make it into "an adequate instrument for the recomposition of the organized workers' movement?"

Here arises a methodological question of great importance. The European document mentions several times the "needs of the vanguard" to which we are supposed to respond, for which we are supposed to carry out carefully devised campaigns, etc. As to the nature of these "needs of the vanguard," however, no more precise information is given. We are left unclear whether these are special needs or whether they are identical with those of the masses. If they are identical with those of the masses, what is the need for this term? If they are not identical, how can they be the needs of a vanguard? Despite all the obscurity of the analysis we can conclude from the practice of our own, as well as of the other sections that this means special "needs" of the left milieu, toward which we are orienting. To what extent we are thereby fulfilling the role of Communists, who, as it has been well known since Marx and Engels are distinguished by the fact that they "always represent the interests of the entire movement," must be examined in specific cases.

The European document's conception amounts to a new two-stage theory of the revolution. In the first stage, our line is centered on the new vanguard, and once we transform it into an adequate instrument—God knows how, presumably through "carefully selected" campaigns—then, with its help, we can set the masses in motion. This construction—like all stages theories—overlooks one small thing: There is no other way to convince the best elements of the "radicalized vanguard" and win them to us but to demonstrate the effectiveness of our analysis and program in the day-to-day class struggle.

This "broad vanguard" consists essentially of competing currents, all of which claim to be showing the masses the way to revolution. In this milieu, hegemony cannot be won on a propagandistic or purely ideological level—by means of carefully selected campaigns on Ireland, Ceylon, or repression, or by speeches about our program. Only to the extent that we prove ourselves capable of putting into practice our road to revolution—independent mobilization of the masses on the basis of democratic and transitional demands—concretizing it through struggle, and pushing it forward can we win influence within the left. But our orientation must be absolutely clear. We orient to the working masses and not to the left.

Orienting to the left was not, however, invented by the European document. This document only codified the practice that has long existed in many European sections. One example is the refusal of the IMG to organize a solidarity movement based on the demand "immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all British troops from Northern Ireland" even when 20,000 persons demonstrated for this in London, because it was shouted down in far-left circles as "liberal." Another is the Ligue's refusal to organize a campaign against the ban on Ernest Mandel because the "vanguard" is not interested in such questions. Still another is the fact that our campaign against the ban on the KPD [Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands—Communist Party of Germany, a Maoist group that took the name under which the official Stalinist party was outlawed] was focused exclusively on unity in action of the "left" (an important component of the campaign, to be sure) without any attempt to put pressure on, or involve broader layers that could be mobilised on such democratic demands. Added to this is the pathetic role we are playing where day-to-day struggles against repression are being waged and where these involve sections of the masses in struggle—in cases of police incursions into the universities, strike-breaking, evictions, deportation of foreign workers, and many other such fights.

Instead of defining precisely our own tasks in relation to the present and coming mass struggles, the draft document undertakes to formulate tasks for the "new vanguard," as for example on page 13: "The essential task of the new vanguard is not . . . but . . ." (*IIDB*, Vol. 9, No. 5, p. 13.) Here the document's greatest weakness comes to light. As a general principle, it pronounces that orienting to the working class is the most important task of the coming period. But the conditions, prerequisites, and means that we must develop in order to undertake this in a systematic way are not specified.

All comrades are requested to read the European document once again from the standpoint of what it has to propose for our tasks in the unions! It doesn't even name the tasks that we have to accomplish, to say nothing of developing any proposals for achieving them that could be put into practice and if necessary corrected. After the "appearance of the new mass vanguard" in Section 5, and the definition of our "central task" (to win hegemony in this vanguard) in Section 6, the authors in Section 7 are already soaring in fantasies about "revolutionary upsurge and dual power," so that in the next section they can go on from "dual power to revolutionary victory"! The Fourth International must have been content for too long with paper "victories." It is time to turn to the rather more prosaic work of transforming the kind of

puttering around we have generally done into consistent work to achieve clear strategic goals, if we are not to run the risk of remaining a paper tiger. A document that has literally nothing to say about the tasks in our most important arena is useless for our work.

The section of the European document that takes up the various "tactics for building the revolutionary party" is without a doubt one of the most dubious. Here entryism *sui generis* figures as one of three tactics for building the revolutionary party. This tactic, moreover, is claimed to have been correct in the 1950s and 1960s. Independent organization and action by the revolutionary Marxists is presented here as one possibility among others. Deep entry into the Social Democracy (or a Stalinist party) is another possibility, which might be resorted to again. The document leaves this open, calling it a tactical question. In view of the facts, first that the essential bases for this tactic as they were formulated at the 1951 world congress (the apocalyptic theory that a third world war was imminent and would bring a revolutionary situation with it) have proven false; and, second, that to this day no one has seen any of those responsible manage to draw a balance sheet of this tactic, which was followed for seventeen years, the assertions in the document are untenable. As a second tactic, the European document cites "the tactic of massive organic growth of the revolutionary party." As regards this tactic, it notes that we cannot yet "adopt" it because we are not yet the revolutionary party. To describe "massive organic growth" as a tactic, whether you adopt it or not, is certainly an original contribution to the Leninist theory of organization.

The tactic prescribed for our present situation is the above-cited one of winning hegemony in the new mass vanguard. Here again, it must be noted that winning hegemony is not a tactic but a goal. If the document is to help us make progress toward this goal, then it must show the means and prerequisites for achieving it instead of transforming the goal itself into a "tactic." In our opinion, this goal can be achieved only by our movement developing a concrete orientation to the working class and the working masses, that is, above all, developing a tactic for achieving our most immediate strategic goal of building a class-struggle tendency in the unions. It is here precisely that the document falls down and this is by no means by chance.

The "three tactics" that the document offers for building the party prove on closer examination to be soap bubbles. In them is reflected a total incomprehension of our most important tasks. Comrade Hansen noted ironically that he wondered what happened to the fourth tactic, building the party through guerrilla warfare. This parallel is by no means inappropriate. It points up the structural link between the Latin American resolution and the European document on the level of tactics.

On the level of method, in our opinion the criticism that the comrades of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction make of the Ninth Congress resolution, that it prescribes a tactic (rural guerrilla warfare) for an entire continent and an entire period, is absolutely correct. This error is repeated in the European document. Furthermore, the consequences of the suggested "tactic" are largely identical—the development of independent mass work by our movement is neglected, if not hindered.

In order to defend the guerrilla orientation, among other things a picture of the consciousness of the masses was presented in the Ninth World Congress resolution that bore little relation to reality: ". . . the peasants . . . have assimilated the lesson of the Cuban revolution, whose fortunes they continue to follow, and learned a great deal from the guerrilla experiences and are not cut off from the student revolutionary movement, whose influence reaches them by a thousand different channels." (IIDB reprints, *Discussion on Latin America* [1968-72], "Draft Resolution," p. 2.) The consciousness of the masses was thus greatly overestimated. They were supposed to have been revolutionary-minded for a long time and waiting only for an opportunity to take up armed struggle. (It should not surprise anyone that because of the internal inconsistency of this document the opposite is maintained in other places, as on page 6: "In the immediate future, the revolutionary vanguard must be aware of the grave danger inherent in the present situation, characterized, particularly in several countries, by a crying contradiction between the objective potential and the subjective will to struggle of broad strata. . . ." [Draft Resolution," p. 6.] The main lines of the argument are based, however, on the contrary assertion at the beginning of the document.) From the statement that the masses have learned from the Cuban experience that only guerrilla warfare can improve their condition, it is concluded that the political preconditions for revolution have already been achieved. The line that was prescribed for our sections was as follows: "The fundamental perspective, the only realistic perspective for Latin America is that of armed struggle which may last for long years. This is why the technical preparation cannot be conceived merely as one of the aspects of revolutionary work, but as the fundamental aspect on a continental scale, one of the fundamental aspects in those countries where the minimum conditions (!) have not yet been met."

That is clear. Our task is not to root the revolutionary program in the masses by providing organization and leadership in the daily class struggle. That is, this statement is synonymous with abandoning the task for which the Fourth International was founded—building a revolutionary combat party of the working class. As in the European document this line leads in fact to abandoning the difficult work for our movement of developing a mass line in theory and practice.

c. Skepticism about our ability to accomplish this task leads the authors to formulate substitutes that can lead the revolution to victory even without overcoming this problem. They are forced all the more to come up with substitutes since they themselves have already put the date of the final conflict in 1978. In this sense, the Latin American document takes an easy way out. It says that guerrilla warfare is not an obstacle to party building but that rather the private war of our sections with the bourgeois army is the best and only conceivable road to building the party under the given circumstances.

The European document, as we all know, proposes another solution. Our work in the new vanguard is supposed to lead us to the point where we "transform it, making it an adequate instrument for the recomposition of the organized workers movement." That is the strategic formula for abdicating our chief political task.

The authors of our section's draft political document seem to have set their priorities according to the same logic. In Section 17, "three priorities for the utilization of our forces" are enumerated. Along with the primitive accumulation of cadres and a rhetorical reference to "sinking roots deeper in the working-class and trade-union arena," we see "making a central political breakthrough" figure as a priority (p. 48). Whatever this is supposed to mean, and that is not clear from the text, it sheds light on the authors' conception of our tasks and potentialities. Does anyone know any member of the Fourth International who is against a "central political breakthrough"? There can be no question of this. The point is that the authors take the principle of "get rich quick" and spin it out into a whole conception of politics. It is an easily demonstrable fact that fantasies about "breakthroughs" haunt the documents of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank current. If the international "majority" accuses the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction of viewing party building in isolation from political tasks—which in our opinion is not justified—then they must accept the charge that they have separated their "breakthrough" from our tasks, in fact made it into our chief task, made it into a "priority" in and of itself. As we all know, the guerrilla line was supposed to achieve a "breakthrough" in Bolivi ("the rest will follow"—Livio, Ninth World Congress). Today, it is hegemony in the new vanguard, and "the rest will follow."

The draft resolution on Europe was accepted at the unification congress of the GIM and RKJ [Revolutionäre Kommunistische Jugend—Revolutionary Communist Youth] as the basis for our work, after the efforts to achieve a political foundation failed owing to the political weaknesses and heterogeneity of the organization. This took place without discussion, and thus in an undemocratic way. In our opinion, this was a political error that must be rectified.

Two Methods of Determining Strategy; Two Conceptions of the Transitional Program

The underlying methodological error in both the Latin American resolution of the last world congress and the European document consists in deriving a single obligatory tactic for a number of sections from a broad analysis. This is done without examining the concrete situations in which the tactic is to be applied and without considering the modifications made necessary by the state of our forces in certain areas. In fact, in narrowing the work of the organization, such a specific tactic is transformed into a strategic orientation.

This error, which has become traditional in a section of our movement, reveals confusion regarding some fundamental categories of revolutionary politics. To be sure, the matter does not end here, as we shall see.

Tactics, as means, are devised for single tasks or areas of the class struggle; strategy, on the other hand, is designed for the entire class struggle. While a strategy requires an overall analysis and, derived from that, objectives, a program that is to be achieved by the strategy, tactics are only the building blocks of strategy. A strategy is a combination of tactics, which, once again, must be seen as means of translating given points of the pro-

gram into reality. Our program is a proletarian one; therefore it can be achieved only by the working class itself. It can be achieved only when the proletariat has a revolutionary leadership and likewise it can be carried forward only by such a leadership. So, the process of building the revolutionary party, building sections of the Fourth International, is at the same time a struggle to put across our program. This assumes that the core of the revolutionary party we want to build develops specific analyses and evaluations of areas of work against the background of general analyses of the trends in the evolution of capitalist society. Otherwise, a tactically correct and principled intervention in the struggles of the class and its allied social strata, or those layers that come into conflict with the capitalist system at specific points, would be impossible. We should add that to this extent the proletariat, and especially its revolutionary leadership, have an objective interest in a program capable of solving the problems of the class. The leadership, or those forces that aspire to leadership, has the duty, moreover, to put across the program to the class by means of a correct strategy, and thus with a number of correct tactics.

If we were to carry over the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency's fundamental methodological error of limiting the organization's intervention in the class struggle to a single task—and thus to one point of the program—this would immediately have the gravest consequences for building a revolutionary party in Germany as a section of the Fourth International.

In importance for the work of the organization, the program would recede to the background and decline into a mere adjunct. The program of the Trotskyist movement would thus be removed from the test of class struggles. Underestimating the importance of programmatic questions is a logical consequence of such a policy. The yardstick for measuring the possibilities of common work with other organizations is naturally their attitude toward specific tactics we are carrying out. Obviously we would not challenge this in and of itself. But if we limit our work to one tactic, this narrows inadmissibly and dangerously the range of forces with which common work is possible. Applying the united-front tactic, for example, is reduced in the case of the Latin American resolution to common work with other guerrilla organizations. In the case of the propaganda campaign it was limited to arguing for "unity in action by the (revolutionary) left."

"The dividing line between revolutionaries and opportunists today is the question of solidarity with the KPD (RF) against state oppression! (Political Bureau Statement of June 1, 1973, in *Org-Info-Brief*, No. 13.) The attitude of these tendencies to our tactic tended to become the yardstick for measuring their revolutionary character, no matter what their program was. On the programmatic level, conciliationist tendencies crept in. This attitude of indifference to program is the result of the method employed by the IEC Majority Tendency.

The other side of this political line is a tendency to remove the program from the real class struggle. The attempt to shift the focus of building the organization away from the front line of the class struggle, where the masses move directly into action, to a distinct vanguard, whose "concerns" you are supposed to appeal to, necessarily has effects on party building and program.

The program—whose purpose is to formulate, based on concrete analysis of the evolution of bourgeois society and its component classes, radical and therefore effective solutions for the masses oppressed by the existing social relations—no longer links up to the tendencies to resist developed spontaneously by the proletariat and other sections of society. The task of revolutionary Marxists is no longer seen as organizing the spontaneous struggles of the class, strengthening the confidence of the class in its own power, and thus putting across the program as the conscious, direction-setting element in the spontaneous self-mobilization of the workers. Our program, the program of the Fourth International, is the general expression of the objective needs of the proletarian class struggle. Instead of formally counterposing our program to the real struggle, which bears the imprint of specific conditions, we must defend it. And this means continually re-deriving every point from all the tangible conditions that the working class may experience. This program is the basis of the organization and not a mask that changes according to whim.

Two Attitudes to the Transitional Program

"The masses do not take their orientation in the first instance from programs," the European document says. That is true when it's only paper yellowing in the archives. The masses learn through their experience, and not, one might add, through the "exemplary" propaganda campaigns of isolated "new vanguards." The masses must learn in their struggles to appreciate the value of our program. They have to come to know our cadres through their own experience. They have to get to know the practical leadership qualities of our comrades. They have to learn that we don't only conduct propaganda campaigns but are able to lead their struggles effectively and successfully. The prerequisite for this is a correct mass line, programmatic firmness, and tactical skill. That is, there is no other adequate instrument for leading class struggles but a revolutionary party, a section of the Fourth International, which must be built in the partial struggles of the working class and its allied strata in and before (!) the "decisive battles."

We have already stressed that the program is the expression of spontaneous tendencies in the development of the class struggle, just as the aspects of the class struggle form the basis of correct tactics. Today the character of an epoch gives partial struggles—and an organization of our strength cannot lead any other kind at present—a certain dynamic. The inability of the imperialist system to make substantial concessions, even in the case of relatively limited day-to-day issues or democratic demands, and above all in the case of transitional demands, gives *all* such struggles a special dynamic. Especially if they are under a revolutionary leadership, these struggles deepen and escalate with lightning swiftness. A radicalization in the method of struggle is the result. Factory occupations, militant pickets, and sudden leaps in consciousness coming from isolated embryos of dual power—limited to individual plants for the most part—are possible.

The consciousness of the working class as a whole remains under the predominant influence of the traditional traitorous leaderships. The tasks of revolutionary Marxists are therefore highly differentiated and must be deter-

mined on the basis of concrete analyses. The Transitional Program states that, because of the above-described dynamic that exists in this epoch, the Fourth International takes up and defends *all* demands of the masses. When struggles arise we take up their goals and show the way to achieve them. Through participating in such struggles, the cadres active in them must decide when the masses involved in the fight are "ripe" to adopt new objectives and *then* formulate these objectives. In this way, they will help to carry the struggle forward and develop its inherent dynamic. The section of the class that has not participated in the struggle, which remains under the influence of the bureaucratic leaderships, has not, however, undergone this development. It has still to go through the necessary experiences to reach the corresponding conclusions. Here the revolutionary Marxists must begin "from scratch," except that is, for their own enriched experience in the class struggle. As regards building the party, this implies that this work will proceed in an uneven way. In some areas, the party is already well rooted, in others it is not. Even with the best analytical capacities, it is impossible to predict how this process will move forward area by area. Tactical flexibility is therefore enormously important. The organization must be able to change its tactics overnight when altered conditions demand it.

The European document advocates another approach, which does not involve trying to integrate yourself in the existing movements and fighting for political influence within them in order to carry these movements forward. It builds its "tactics" on the perspective of winning the present leaders of these movements, the "new mass vanguard" through specially tailored propaganda. Beyond this, it projects "exemplary" struggles. In other words, it responds to the concrete consciousness of the masses, which is entrapped in bourgeois ideology, with maximalist propaganda. We have already shown above how this line passes over the concrete class struggle, how it leads directly into a sectarian blind alley. You cannot root yourself in the struggles of the class and its allied strata today, if you hold up the image of what they will be tomorrow in front of them.

This is the second consequence of the methodological error in determining strategy. It is an error that directly involves the conception and understanding of the Transitional Program.

The character of the imperialist epoch gives even struggles of a limited content a dynamic that tends in the direction of dual power. There is unanimous agreement on this. Objectively, all these struggles imply the question of power—but only objectively. The influence of reformist and traitorous leaderships, which operates to hold back the development and spread of these struggles, is deeply rooted in the consciousness of the broader masses. In accordance with every concrete situation, this requires using the most diverse tactics, *which take account of this influence* and directly combat it, including in the "new mass vanguard." It is only in this way, with the help of the method of the Transitional Program and an understanding of the fundamental character of the epoch, that the leadership crisis of the proletariat can be solved.

The dynamic of partial struggles that arises from the proletarian policy of alliances consists essentially of the allied strata subordinating their interests qualitatively to those of the proletariat. So, once again, we see propa-

gating proletarian revolution offered as a substitute for a real policy of alliances. There is no understanding of the need to convince the allied strata on the basis of their own experience in the course of their struggles themselves of the need for a socialist revolution. There is an attempt to bridge the gap between the objective and subjective conditions for revolution through propaganda. But alliances with nonproletarian strata develop precisely because the "special" interests of certain sectors are not satisfied by capitalism and can be supported by the proletariat to sharpen the crisis of the bourgeois system. The proletariat and its parties must encourage these strata to press their interests in a militant way against the bourgeoisie and its institutions by means of direct, independent action. This applies, for example, to the peasantry in the underdeveloped countries. After the revolution the question of alliances arises in different social conditions, but that need not be taken up here.

Let's Discuss the Real Problem!

Comrade Mintoff's reinterpreting the Transitional Program and its method into an instrument of sectarian propagandism clarifies in a certain sense his preference for the Latin American and European documents. At the same time this is the key to understanding the rumors about "reformism" and "sectoralism" that he, among others, has been spreading.

For us a perspective is "sectoral when its range is limited exclusively to partial social struggles and it conceives of the revolutionary process as one of addition rather than integration." In the light of this definition, any perspective is sectoralist, in the last analysis, that is not

based on the totality of social relations. An example of this was provided by our organization for a certain period, when we mechanically combined sectoral perspectives under the fetishistic term "the dialectical interrelationship of areas of work."

A perspective is reformist that rests on the illusion that the capitalist system can be gradually superseded through a series of reforms. We also fight for reforms, but without falling into this illusion. Calling *this* reformist is either stupidity or a deliberate attempt to prejudice the discussion by poisoning the atmosphere.

In any case, such superficial labeling of tendencies and sections rebounds on its authors. This practice helps to clear up what their programmatic positions are. The questions that face our movement and its German section today require frank and deepgoing discussion. What is involved are two methods of determining strategy as well as different conceptions of the program. Stirring up false questions and rumors will not get us anywhere.

On the essential questions our tendency supports the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency in the Fourth International. A series of questions have not yet been discussed or are only now being taken up. We will try to contribute to solving the political crisis of the German section of the Fourth International that has persisted for years. We appeal to all comrades who agree with this declaration and are interested in developing and elaborating these positions further to get in touch with us.

Initial signers: Dieter (Frankfurt), Elke (Frankfurt), Heinrich (Central Committee, Political Bureau), Hermann (Mannheim), Ingrid (Mannheim), Richard (Frankfurt), Siegfried (Heidelberg).

September 14, 1973

Call for the Formation of the Revolutionary Marxist Tendency

In the Gruppi Comunisti Rivoluzionari, Italian section of the Fourth International

The course of the international discussion and the positions taken by different tendencies in the internal discussion in the various sections clearly demonstrate the following points:

a) The world discussion is still far from coming to a conclusion. New elements, new information, and new contributions continue to pour in, enriching the subject matter of an already quite rich discussion.

b) The bearing of the differences originally expressed on the question of Latin America has now extended to other important sectors of the world revolution, crystallizing finally in a discussion on the methodology of building an international revolutionary party.

c) The two tendencies that initially polarized the discussion do not represent all the positions existing in the International. From this standpoint, the formation of so-called third tendencies is quite a significant phenomenon.

d) Although belatedly, the main documents are beginning to be translated and to become known to the ranks. This is helping to revive the discussion and get it going again even in those sections where the debate has been less lively up till now. The arrival of documents and information is enabling comrades in the less well-informed sections who are not members of the IEC to begin to take part actively in the discussion. At the same time, positions adopted hastily on the basis of one-sided information and reading one or two documents are being put totally in question, and if they are confirmed subsequently, it will be on the basis of a fuller understanding. (We find no difficulty in admitting frankly that some of the signers of this appeal, after familiarizing themselves with a series of documents and facts important for understanding the real terms of the debate, have had to revise in part some of the positions they had taken in the past.)

e) This last point brings up a matter that is still vital today for a better development of the pre-congress discussion—the question of *information*. Without information, or with only partial or distorted information, members can of course finally cast their vote but they certainly cannot acquire a political understanding of the problems now facing the Fourth International.

f) The most acute dangers of a split in the International seem to have diminished since the unanimous adoption of the ten-point resolution by the US on September 19, 1973. Nonetheless, there are a series of elements that require members of the Fourth International to remain on guard against a resurgence of such dangers and against any violations of democratic centralism.

The Revolutionary Marxist Tendency has already made an initial contribution to the European discussion, proposing a detailed program for building the revolutionary party in Italy. This contribution, like that of the Italian

Central Committee, or those of other European sections or sympathizing groups, is offered to the International to enrich the discussion initiated by the IEC majority's document on Europe and the criticisms of it raised by Comrade Waters.

On the basis of our present knowledge and the international documents that have been translated and made available to the Italian section, the members of the Revolutionary Marxist Tendency declare their agreement on the following points:

1) The criticism of the European document of the IEC majority presented in Part I of the "Controprogetto di documento politico" [Counter Political Resolution] submitted to the national conference in Boletino Interno, no. 18, of October 8, 1973 (points 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11 on pp. 1-9 and pp. 17-20).*

2) The general guidelines for building the revolutionary party in Italy summed up in Thesis 5 of the "controprogetto di documento politico" (pp. 55-60 of Part II in *Boletino Interno* no. 18, of October 10, 1973).*

3) The general lines of the assessment of the experience in Argentina and Bolivia contained in "Argentina and Bolivia: a Balance Sheet."

4) The necessity of fighting to preserve the unity of the Fourth International against any tendencies toward a split that might arise and against any violation of democratic centralism from whatever quarter it comes. In support of these last two points, the Revolutionary Marxist Tendency declares itself ready to block with any other tendency against attempts to divide the International or violate democratic centralism. This position corresponds to the spirit of the two declarations approved unanimously by the US (April 9, 1973, and September 19, 1973), which have not yet been translated into Italian.

5) Conscious of our own limitations and the difficulties arising from the lack of information in the Italian section about the international discussion, the Revolutionary Marxist Tendency will fight for a better circulation of international information and in particular defend the right of *all* tendencies to present their own positions as clearly as possible on all occasions.

To join the tendency or make contact with us, write to M. Polverosi, via L. Caro 38, Roma, Italia.

Signed: Antonella, Paolo, Raffaele, Roberto.

Rome, October 19, 1973

Copies to the International Majority Tendency, the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction, and the Kompass Tendency

* Note: This bulletin is currently being translated and will be printed in the SWP Internal Information Bulletin as soon as possible.

The International Undermined by Reformism

By J. Montero

[The following article is translated from the internal discussion in the Grupo Trotskista Venezolano (GTV—Venezuelan Trotskyist Group), sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Venezuela.]

* * *

Comrades:

Certain aspects of the internal polemics in the Fourth International reached their culmination in 1972. I am referring not only to the differences on Latin America but also to the irreconcilable divergences on a world level.

I. The Grave Violations of the Statutes and Revolutionary Norms of the Fourth International

The confrontation between our comrades of the heroic PRT-ERP (Argentine section of the Fourth International) and the leadership of the SWP (sympathizing party of the Fourth International), the main spokesman and head of the minority, is already known by many comrades. The situation has become intolerable because of the grave, repeated violations committed by the representatives of the SWP of the statutes of our world party, of the most elementary norms of conduct involving revolutionary solidarity, and in general of the discipline imposed by democratic centralism.

Here are some examples:

(a) With regard to the Sanchez-Sallustro affair, the leadership of the SWP printed a public censure in its press against the action of the PRT-ERP, violating quite precise norms requiring that differences be kept within the organization.

(b) At its last convention [1971], the SWP sent various greetings, including to Irish nationalists, but did not say a single word in support of our comrades of the Argentine PRT and the Bolivian POR, the very Trotskyist sections fighting arms in hand! The very sections of the Fourth International who were victims of the repression of the bourgeoisie!

(c) The Argentine comrades have said (I am referring to information received from them) that neither P. nor Linda Jenness, both of them sent to Argentina by the leadership of the SWP, tried to get in touch with the section of the Fourth International, but strengthened their links with the sympathizing group of Moreno, thus breaking the statutory rules requiring that contact with sympathizing groups be established solely *through* our section in the country. In a public meeting Linda Jenness did not even mention the PRT-ERP to express so much as elementary revolutionary solidarity.

(d) In a recent article published in *The Militant* (Sep-

tember 15, 1972), signed by Peter and entitled "Argentine Parties Prepare for Coming Elections" (sic), the PRT-ERP is mentioned only in passing and without stating that it is Trotskyist or that it is the section of the Fourth International, and as the height of everything he lied, saying that the clandestine organizations "have no program for the day-to-day struggles of the masses." On the other hand, the entire article in question is a consummate example of capitulation to bourgeois electoralism, of out-and-out pacifism; in short, of a truly lamentable ideological poverty!

These are only a few examples. But one can assume that there are much worse secret goings-on, and that the Argentine Trotskyists who are battling so heroically and not limiting themselves to shooting off their mouth in the legal press, are victims of real sabotage by those whose duty it is to supply logistical and material support to their struggle.

Consequently it is necessary to ask the IEC to take a firm, consistent position with regard to this, otherwise the Fourth International can become converted into a federalist organization, repeating the well-known and ill-fated example of the Second International. It is imperative to condemn without vacillation the grave violations of the statutes of the Fourth International committed by the leadership of the SWP and to take disciplinary measures in the matter.

II. The Root of the Problem: the Reformist Degeneration of the Leadership of the Socialist Workers Party

The violations of discipline committed by the leadership of the SWP are only the consequence of profound ideological, political, and practical differences that the leadership of the SWP has with the revolutionary majority of the Fourth International. And we state categorically that the leadership of the SWP has landed completely into full reformism, both with respect to struggle within the United States and the struggle on the international level.

That a Marxist party can fall into the lowest reformism, while covering itself with orthodox verbiage is something well known and demonstrated by one hundred years of history. We Trotskyists likewise have not been immunized or vaccinated in this regard. The still recent case of the Ceylonese section can be cited as an example.

Reformism is manifested not only by the adoption of a reformist theory (case of Bernstein, or of Stalin), but also, and perhaps to a greater degree, by *REFORMIST PRACTICE*. It was reformist practice, more than anything else, that determined the slow erosion of the parties of the Second International, especially in the legal parties with large memberships that held parliamentary illusions. It was reformist practice and not solely the Stalinist theories that determined the erosion of the Communist parties, above all after the second world war.

How is reformist practice manifested in the SWP? In many ways. We can begin with the simple fact of how it presents itself to the public. Its own central organ *The Militant* presents itself as "socialist" (a word that means very little today), avoiding presenting itself as "Trotskyist," "Communist," or "revolutionary Marxist." The "camouflage" of the SWP is so thick that even a daily as well informed as *Le Monde* identifies it as "pro-Castroist" in its comments on the elections in the USA.

In its political activity in the USA, the SWP advances only the most moderate and innocuous minimum slogans possible—at the same level as merely progressive organizations. What is certain is that, to our knowledge, for long years neither the press of the SWP nor the organization itself have been hit by the repressive bodies of the American bourgeoisie, an unmistakable sign that they are not creating any serious problem. Decades of tranquil legality have softened the party, strengthening the legalistic tendencies within it, routinism, electoralism, self-satisfaction, and cowardice. The SWP has become converted into more of a nostalgic defender of the historic personality of Trotsky than into a genuine revolutionary-Marxist party such as the great Leon Davidovich would have wanted. A Marxist party that does not confront bourgeois legality with courage and audacity, that is not hit or persecuted for decades, has ceased being revolutionary. Verbiage and resorting to quotations from the classics torn out of context are converted into its reason for being. **A PARTY LIKE THIS WILL NEVER ATTRACT THE REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH OF THE UNITED STATES.**

The campaign of the SWP in the last elections in the USA constituted the latest and most finished example of the congenital reformism of the leadership of this party. When for the first time in decades a genuine political crisis shook the colossus of the North, when the American youth and vast sectors of the country mobilized against the policies of their government, the leadership of the SWP, instead of mounting an audacious, combative, Bolshevik campaign, limited itself to tail-ending or going along at the same level as the religious and pacifist organizations, without trying to carry forward the big mobilizations of the people. The slogan "Withdraw U.S. Troops from Vietnam" was the same for the SWP as for the pacifist groups. When the real Bolshevik slogan for the SWP should have been "Victory to the Vietnamese Revolution!" or "Carry the Revolution to Saigon!" Because the withdrawal of the U.S. infantry was *not all* that was involved. What was involved was the defeat of the capitalist system in Saigon, with Thieu or without Thieu, with Yankee troops or without them! A genuine revolutionary-Marxist party tries always, above all in times of crisis, to raise the political consciousness of the masses to the maximum, and not tail-end at their level. It is precisely this that differentiates revolutionary Marxists from reformist "Marxists."

The worst side of the matter is that there are reasons to believe that the leadership of the SWP, bogged down in electoral reformism, is even ignorant of the national reality in the USA. The leadership of the SWP did not foresee in the slightest way the very high and very significant abstentionism in the recent elections, the highest (46 percent) by far in the postwar period in the Northern country. The slogan of boycotting or abstaining in these bourgeois elections would have been more effective—and

more far-sighted—than a legalistic, moderate, and timid electoral campaign, which to cap everything was a complete failure. The insignificant vote gained by the SWP demonstrated that the campaign did not arouse enthusiasm among the workers, nor the revolutionary youth, nor the Blacks and Chicanos, and not even, it appears, the sought-after representatives of the third sex!

But still worse is the policy advanced by the SWP in international affairs. The representatives and traveling salesmen of the leadership of the SWP carry on a special, suspicious opposition to all the sections of the Fourth International that are bold enough to resort to armed struggle in any of its forms. The "theoretical" arguments based on quotations from the classical texts torn out of context are only a smoke screen used to delude the unwary and to justify their own pusillanimity. The truth is that the leadership of the SWP is in a panic over becoming victims of the bourgeois repression, since it is evident that the whole International is in solidarity or coparticipants with all the sections that are victims of this repression. To solidarize with the PRT-ERP or the Bolivian POR involves running the risk of also being hit in Paris, in New York, or in Tokyo by the respective bourgeoisies. The leadership of the SWP slithers out of the way in face of the danger. One proof of this is the whining, sniveling, deplorable article signed by J. Rothschild in *Intercontinental Press* (September 25, 1972) with regard to an article in *Newsweek* magazine insinuating that the Fourth International is a terrorist organization.

In short, the leadership of the SWP has provided more than sufficient proof of everything that Lenin and Trotsky tirelessly denounced—religious respect for the laws of the bourgeois state, a dogmatic and routinist mentality, conservatism, total absence of revolutionary audacity, total absence of imagination and creative talent, and finally manifest pusillanimity.

III. The Next Congress of the International and the Battle Against Reformism

The Fourth International has been in existence thirty-four years. During long and terrible years, the double persecution from the bourgeoisie and the Stalinists reduced the Trotskyists to a kind of "ghetto" from which it was very difficult to get out. The bankruptcy of Stalinism and the sharpening of the world revolutionary process enabled the Trotskyists to emerge from the catacombs. In recent years our sections have genuinely reached out. Not only have they gained numerically, but on the political and ideological level the influence of Trotskyism is today greater than ever. Certainly the principal merit belongs to the French and Argentine sections, that is, to the Communist League and the PRT-ERP. Each of them in their respective continent has been a genuine beacon of our International. And not by accident. The comrades of both the Communist League and the PRT-ERP have not vacillated in confronting the bourgeois order and the repressive apparatus of the state. If the French Trotskyists have grown stronger and exerted an influence throughout Europe, this is because of their audacious comportment in the days of May 1968. If Trotskyism is known on an American continental level it is thanks to the PRT-ERP and the Bolivian POR, precisely because

they have demonstrated arms in hand that the Trotskyists are not mere theorizers or *a posteriori* commentators but valiant fighters when the hour for action comes.

Precisely when the International is breaking through in great form in the world political arena, a premature reformist cancer has appeared, gnawing away at its entrails. The situation is very grave. The International is threatened by reformism even before it has built big parties with mass influence.

The fact that the minority, that is, the reformist tendency, is headed and led by the SWP, the organization that stands the farthest to the right in our world party, should be reason for every conscious militant to become seriously alarmed.

The representatives of the SWP in the international leadership, that is the so-called minority, have obstructed and sabotaged every serious revolutionary action on an international level. The sound of shots terrifies them and the throwing of a mere stone is to them ultraleftism. The crisis that the PRT-ERP is undergoing is in great part a consequence of the undermining work of the reformists in the International. It is clear that all logistic and even political support to the armed struggle of the PRT-ERP has been boycotted by the reformist minority. The International can lose many valiant young militants disillusioned by our inactivity caused by the permanent obstruction of the reformist minority. We cannot continue like this!

At the next congress, the tenth, the battle to be opened is the battle between the revolutionary road and the reformist road. Nothing more nor less. There is no possible compromise. A centrist outcome would imply paralysis for the International.

It is necessary to recall certain historic precedents to find anything similar: In the Second International, Lenin and the Bolsheviks represented the revolutionary tendency, with perfectly clear ideas concerning the type of party needed to make a revolution. On paper, the left represented by Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin and others held a majority against the reformism of Bernstein in the whole International. But in practice, only the Bolsheviks, upon breaking with the Mensheviks, including on the organizational plane, proved to be correct.

That is, while Rosa Luxemburg thought it useful or democratic to belong to the same party as the reformists, Lenin with extraordinary political vision was aware that a party with revolutionary claims, but undermined by reformism, had its wings clipped. The Bolshevik Party was able to make the revolution of 1917 in Russia because it had previously broken, up and down the line, with the reformist wing of Russian Marxist socialism. Lenin and the Bolsheviks had their hands free ideologically, politically, and organizationally in 1917. The Bolshevik Party was a party composed of selected audacious revolutionists and not a hybrid or a mixture, paralyzed by a reformist cancer.

In contrast, Rosa L. and Liebknecht, that is, the German revolutionists, were paralyzed in 1914 and even in 1918 because their party was negated by the mass of reformists. The history of this speaks for itself.

It is necessary to bear in mind that the real root of the differences within the Fourth International is not due to differences of appreciation over this or that tactic to be employed in country X or Z. The minority tendency hides

its reformist essence under the mask of a condemnation of guerrillaism. In reality what it wants to combat is revolutionary violence, whose most finished form is the armed struggle for power. That the guerrilla road is not a universal solution for all countries is obvious. But it is also obvious WHY HISTORY HAS DEMONSTRATED that in numerous cases the revolution has been initiated with a guerrilla process. The cases of Yugoslavia, Cuba, Vietnam, and to a certain degree China itself have demonstrated this. Only the blind, the sterile dogmatists—or the cowards—stubbornly resort to the sacred texts, refusing to see the living reality of life and the history of new experiences and the hitherto unknown roads taken by the revolution in its march. Marxism is a living instrument and not an untouchable text for scholastic theologians.

The reformist cancer must be extirpated in the most energetic way or otherwise the Fourth International will commit suicide as the Party of the World Revolution. The battle to be conducted in the next congress can be concluded only with the total defeat of reformism if we want the Fourth International to be not an archive of sacred texts or a tribunal of pedantic commentators but a subversive organization of revolutionary Marxists, the force of the world revolution.

IV. Our Orientation in Venezuela

The Venezuelan Trotskyist Group cannot stand aside, nor is it, from the international polemic. The two orientations, the revolutionary and the reformist are also reflected in our activities on a national level. The differences are clearly reflected even in the pages of *Voz Marxista*.

We, the representatives of the revolutionary tendency, that is, identified with the majority of the United Secretariat and of the International, are in frank disagreement with the direction the policies of our organization in Venezuela have taken. In a direction of completely electoral and legalistic practice.

The critical support given to the socialist candidacy of J.V. Rangel has meaning only to the degree that we stand to the left of him, to the left of MAS. To the degree that we strengthen links with the armed and underground revolutionary groups, forming with them a Revolutionary Socialist Front to intervene in the electoral conjuncture not to *endorse* it or *legitimize* it but to *transform* it into a springboard for the mass struggle in the streets, beyond bourgeois legality and beyond the electoral process itself.

Unfortunately our group is identifying itself more and more with the electoralism of the MAS, with the charismatic glorification of J.V. Rangel (which he himself rejects!), with out-and-out legalism. The two latest issues of *Voz Marxista* are a clear example of what we mean.

The extraordinary influence of Trotskyism in Venezuela, gained in good part by the first issues of *Voz Marxista*, threatens to become the soil for the change shown in our journal in the latest issues, heading toward run-away electoralism. Criticisms from other organizations and revolutionary figures have already begun.

It is imperative to rectify this reformist course. The entire prestige of Trotskyism and of the Fourth International is at stake. Let the comrades ponder the situation well.

The trip to the country of reformism is a trip without a return ticket.

February 1973

Ultraleftism and Sectarianism in Our Ranks

By Miguel Fuente

[The following article is translated from the internal discussion in the Grupo Trotskista Venezolano, sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Venezuela.]

* * *

Introductory Note

At the beginning of March 1973, in a plenary meeting of our organization, Comrade Montero announced that he had a document he had written concerning the internal discussion, and he proceeded to read it. Although it was not on the agenda of the meeting, no objections were made to his reading it before all the members present.

* * *

The article presented by Comrade Montero, entitled "The International Undermined by Reformism," is undermined by assertions that lack veracity and are marked by a fundamental deviation from the Marxist method.

The aberrations are so obvious, it could be argued, that it is not worth wasting time refuting the article. However, owing to the character of the Venezuelan Trotskyist Group, in which the majority of members have only recently joined, we consider it useful to indicate the aberrations and assertions in the article that depart from the facts. Consequently this reply is intended for the members of the GTV in Venezuela, inasmuch as in those sections where the Trotskyist method exists as a tradition, as in the SWP or the Communist League in France, and where the history of our movement is known, Comrade Montero's article is self-refuting.

The article boils down to offering the "discovery" that the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the Trotskyist organization in the USA, is not revolutionary Marxist but reformist. The accusation is a grave one, since under the norms of Leninism a reformist party is excluded from being part of the International. Nevertheless Comrade Montero is, apparently, the only member of the International who has noticed the true nature of the SWP. Comrades Frank, Maitan, and Mandel, for example, who are at present arguing with the SWP (on some of the points in the internal political discussion in our party), and who are representatives of the tendency with which Montero identifies, do not characterize the SWP as being a reformist party. These comrades, like so many others throughout the world, regularly read *The Militant*, *Intercontinental Press*, *International Socialist Review*, *Young Socialist* and many of the pamphlets and books the comrades of the Fourth International publish in the USA. Up to now they have not noticed the "nature" of the SWP

which Comrade Montero has now "discovered" . . . without having bothered to read the publications of the SWP.

In Pierre Frank's book, *History of the Fourth International*, which we published here in Venezuela in 1970 via Ediciones Bárbara, we read the following on page 62:

"At that time [the period from 1938 to 1941—M.F.] the Socialist Workers party was the American section of the Fourth International. Passage of the Voorhis Act in 1940, forbidding labor organizations to belong to an International, resulted in the formal disaffiliation of the SWP, but it has never ceased to remain rigorously faithful to the Trotskyist program." [*Intercontinental Press*, April 3, 1972, p. 372. Emphasis added.]

This should be sufficient to clarify the "discovery"; but the article contains other, graver faults that can be utilized in educating and hardening our members with regard to ultraleftism and sectarianism, and by way of contrast demonstrating the Marxist method required to construct our revolutionary workers combat party in Venezuela.

The SWP

Comrade Montero hurls a whole list of accusations against the SWP. Under the subtitle "The Root of the Problem: The Reformist Degeneration of the Leadership of the Socialist Workers Party," he points out that these "serious violations" of which he accuses the SWP stem from the fact that the aforementioned party stopped being Marxist in practice. But Comrade Montero doesn't tell us *when* this transformation took place, or is it that the SWP has *always* been reformist?

I believe it would be useful to include here a few lines regarding the history of the SWP for the information of new members so that they can evaluate the role that the SWP has played in the formation of our world party and in defending Leninism and Trotskyism against all kinds of petty-bourgeois deviations.

James P. Cannon, one of the founders of the U.S. Communist Party and the founder of Trotskyism in the United States, documents how the party emerged in that country in his book *The History of American Trotskyism*. While a leader of the CPUSA, Cannon became aware that Trotsky was correct in his struggle against Stalin when in 1928 in Moscow, on the occasion of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, he read the extraordinary document written by Trotsky from exile, "The Draft Program of the Communist International—A Criticism of Fundamentals," which several Bolshevik-Leninists had with great difficulty succeeded in inserting into the documents distributed to the delegates.

In 1928 then the Left Opposition appeared in the United States, Trotskyism, defending Leninism against Stalinism. In the beginning the group was composed of only three comrades: Martin Abern, James P. Cannon, and Max

Shachtman. During this period the CPUSA had perhaps 10,000-15,000 militants and some ten dailies! Overnight these three leaders were totally isolated. It was a hard beginning in difficult conditions.

In 1929 Cannon wrote the following on the occasion of the first national Trotskyist conference: "We were sure we were right. We were sure that our program was correct. We went from that conference with the confident assurance that the whole future development of the regenerated Communist movement in America, up to the time the proletariat takes power and begins organizing the socialist society, would trace its origin to that first National Conference of the American Trotskyists at Chicago in May 1929. [Cannon, James P., *The History of American Trotskyism*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1972, p. 79.]

A hundred militants attended. During the spring of 1929 they established contact with Trotsky. From that time until his death in Mexico eleven years later, Trotsky was intimately involved in the work and growth of Trotskyism in the United States. Trotsky never advanced the idea that he considered the SWP reformist.

Comrades can read *In Defense of Marxism - Against the Petty-Bourgeois Opposition*, in which Trotsky defends the proletarian tendency, represented by Cannon, Hansen, Novack, and others, against a petty-bourgeois tendency that emerged around the question of the nature of the Soviet Union and criticized our unconditional support for the workers state. In this book Trotsky, referring to the evolution of the political discussion in the SWP, wrote: "I will not go into the historical sequence of the faction fight, referring the reader to the in every respect excellent article by Joseph Hansen, 'Organizational Methods and Political Principles.'" [Merit Publishers, 1965, p. 60.]

Trotsky was the direct teacher of the cadres that forged the SWP. Through the SWP we have the most direct organic link to Trotsky's active participation in constructing the Fourth International.

The Transitional Program and the SWP

The Transitional Program is our party's fundamental programmatic document. In various instances Trotsky pointed out that it was prepared in close collaboration with the North American comrades, and he asked them to present it at the first world congress of the Fourth International in Paris in 1938.

The SWP and the Class Struggle in the United States

The SWP has a rich experience in the struggles of the North American working people. Although during the first years the Trotskyists in the United States found themselves isolated, the world revolution in an ebb, fascism on the rise, and Stalinism at its peak, already in 1934 they led one of the most important struggles of the workers in the annals of the U.S. proletariat: the two teamsters' strikes in the city of Minneapolis. Cannon and Shachtman were among those imprisoned, but in the end the struggle was victorious—the bosses were forced to recognize the trade union and bargain with it, but not before pitched

battles were waged between the police, national guard, and bosses' thugs on one side and workers and self-defense brigades organized by the Trotskyists on the other side.

The SWP waged another outstanding fight in 1941 on the eve of the entry of the United States into the second world war. President Roosevelt had banned strikes under the pretext of "unity and national security" in face of the war. In its eagerness to comply with the dictates of "peaceful coexistence," the CP in fact accepted this command of the bourgeoisie over the working class. Our comrades, on the other hand, defended the workers' right to strike, independently of the inter-bourgeois imperialist war, which they of course condemned.

In 1940 the anticommunist and anti-trade-union Smith Law was passed. It won wide notoriety in later years, including the McCarthy epoch. The first target of this law was the Trotskyist party in 1941. Cannon and the whole top layer of the party were jailed, and Army troops broke into the party headquarters and confiscated all the literature. The aim wasn't just to strike a blow at the party, but to *destroy it*.

The leaders of Teamsters Union Local 544 and the leaders of the party, 29 in all, were accused of: "(1) Advocating overthrow of the government by force; (2) Publishing and circulating literature advocating this; (3) Forming organizations 'to teach, advocate and encourage' such overthrow; (4) Becoming members of such organizations; (5) Distributing publications which 'advised, counseled and urged' insubordination in the armed forces." [*Socialism on Trial*, Introduction by George Novack, Merit Publishers, 1969, New York. p. 5.]

Defensive Formulations

Cannon's defense before the court is a big lesson on the revolutionary-Marxist method of utilizing the judicial process to publicize revolutionary ideas and principles; instead of rejecting struggle by means of those same bourgeois laws, revolutionary Marxists demand that they uphold democratic rights.

An example of this method is Trotsky's defense before the Czarist court in 1906. Another more recent defense was that of Comrade Mandel last year in relationship to the West German government's arbitrary ban against his giving university lectures, even going so far as to prohibit him from entering Germany.

The stenographer's rendering of the interrogation that Cannon was subjected to is published in Spanish under the title *Wall Street enjuicia al socialismo* (Ediciones Lucha Obrera, Mexico, 1945). We have a copy, and we suggest that all militants read this book, which in the edition printed in England is titled *The ABCs of Trotskyism*.

The method followed by Cannon in his defense, that is, of utilizing defensive formulations, provoked an ultra-left critique by a Spanish comrade, Grandizo Munis, who shortly thereafter left the ranks of the Fourth International. Munis's critique, as well as Cannon's reply were published in *International Bulletin*, No. 2 in 1942, under the title "Defense Policy in the Minneapolis Trial."

The concept of defensive formulation of demands and revolutionary slogans flows directly from the whole Marxist-Leninist tradition. In essence it consists of taking into

account the mass level of consciousness and starting from the basis of the right of all workers to defend themselves and their conquests in the face of the assault and violence of the ruling class. Such formulations lead the masses to dialectically assimilate the lessons of their own experience and to move into offensive action, while glowing formal slogans for "direct action" do not link up with the masses.

In *The History of the Russian Revolution* Trotsky cites an example of how this method was put into practice by the Bolsheviks. Referring not to the years prior to 1917, but to the days preceding the October insurrection, Trotsky wrote the following: "Although an insurrection can win only on the offensive, it develops better, the more it looks like self-defense." ["The Conquest of the Capital," *The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1957, Vol. II, p. 207*] "'We got word from Trotsky to broadcast . . . that the counter-revolution had taken the offensive.' Here too the defensive formulation concealed a summons to insurrection addressed to the whole country." [Ibid., p. 208.] "Observe this: that twenty-four hours before the insurrection the task was still defined in terms of defense, and not attack." [Ibid. p. 188.]

The SWP Today

The resurgence of the world revolution following the second world war brought with it a rise in revolutionary Marxism and the crisis of Stalinism. The United States was not immune to this process, although the effects came later; and in the middle of the last decade a new upsurge of struggles began in that country that were expressed through the Vietnam antiwar movement, the Black, Chicano, and Native American struggles, the women's liberation movement, and the movement of radicalized students. In all of these spheres the SWP reached out politically and has and is making quantitative and qualitative advances in the job of building a Leninist combat party in the USA.

Comrade Montero's Positions

"In its political activity in the USA," writes Comrade Montero, "the SWP advances only the most moderate and innocuous minimum slogans possible. . . ."

This statement reveals an ignorance of the *facts*. Let's look at one example among thousands that we could quote. On the last page of "Out Now, Vote Socialist Workers," a pamphlet distributed by the tens of thousands during the 1972 election campaign, we read: "The Socialist Workers Party campaign is devoted to ending the capitalist system of war and inequality—a system that degrades human life, distorts cultural values, and prevents the mass of people from controlling the institutions that affect their lives." To call for the overthrow of the capitalist system is not a "minimum slogan."

Then Comrade Montero asserts that the supposed fact that the press "of the SWP . . . [has not] been hit by the repressive bodies . . . [is] an unmistakable sign that they are not creating any serious problem."

Comrade Montero establishes with this sentence that he doesn't know how bourgeois repression operates. The repressive measures—or concessions—of the bourgeoisie don't normally match the bourgeoisie's *wishes*, but the

relationship of forces between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The fact that John Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI until his death, wrote and widely distributed an article titled "The Red University: Goal of Trotskyist Communism in the U.S.," attacking the SWP and its youth organization, the Young Socialist Alliance, demonstrates that there is no lack of *desire* to crush the small party. Why hasn't it been crushed? For the simple reason that the class struggle is essentially dialectical. The bourgeoisie, let us recall, promotes the illusion dominating the minds of workers to a greater or lesser extent that there is democracy, the right to political freedom, etc. They have to maintain, as they actually do, this false "appearance" of society, and they think twice before repressing a political organization if that organization hasn't given them a good excuse, because by doing so they run the risk that sectors of the masses will realize that no such democracy exists. This is why mass mobilization on the basis of defensive formulations of democratic rights, etc., constitutes an effective defense against the repression. This is how it has been understood by the entire Trotskyist movement.

Then Montero tells us: "A Marxist party that does not confront bourgeois legality with courage and audacity, that is not hit or persecuted for decades, has ceased being revolutionary."

In the first place it is false that the SWP hasn't been "hit or persecuted for decades." But more important, whether or not a party is revolutionary is determined by its *program, activity, and organization*, and not the fact that it has or hasn't been hit by the repression. As for bourgeois legality, Montero's approach is alien to revolutionary Marxism. Lenin approached the question in this way: "Legality is a conquest of the masses, not to use it is to betray the masses." That is, revolutionists have the *obligation to take advantage* of legality and do everything possible to keep from being hit by the repression, without compromising, of course, on principles.

The concept that a party isn't genuinely revolutionary unless it is illegal, that is, it is "hit," did not originate with Comrade Montero. In 1921-22 it was precisely the majority of the CPUSA that agreed with this distortion of the Leninist method. Cannon opposed this concept, and his tendency was called "the liquidators." In 1922 Cannon went to the Fourth World Congress of the International as one of the delegates representing "the liquidators." This was the first time that Cannon personally met Trotsky. He explained to Trotsky the reasons for his criticism of the concept that preferred "illegality." After listening to him, Trotsky replied: "That is enough. I will support the 'liquidators' and I will talk to Lenin. . . . All the Russians will support you. It is just a question of understanding the political situation. It is absurd to bind ourselves in an underground straitjacket when it is not necessary. There is no question about that." [Cannon, James P., *The History of American Trotskyism*, Pathfinder Press, 1972, p. 17.] Lenin agreed and the entire Russian (Bolshevik) delegation as well. This helped turn the balance in favor of the "liquidationist" minority, which later won a majority in the party in the USA on the basis of this issue.

Comrade Montero states (in capitals) that a party like the SWP will never attract the revolutionary youth of the United States. But it is precisely our comrades in the SWP

and YSA who with Trotskyist methods have been able—within the imperialist monster where the fate of humanity will eventually be decided—to construct a party that, although small, has the most solid Trotskyist tradition and until 1968 was the largest section of the International. Today the YSA is, the firmest, the most vigorous, and most influential revolutionary youth organization on the left in the USA.

Comrade Montero is mistaken when he says that the SWP's slogan with respect to the antiwar movement is the same as that of pacifist groups. For example, pacifist groups put forth the slogan "negotiations," or more recently "Nixon, sign for peace!", while the SWP was the first organization in the USA to raise the slogan "U. S. troops out of Vietnam now!", which has a revolutionary content, because if the U.S. troops really got out of Vietnam, the puppet government would collapse in face of the mass support that the NLF enjoys.

The basis of the question is that our comrades of the SWP give priority to formulating slogans in such a way that they mobilize sectors of the masses toward anticapitalist struggles. Comrade Montero ignores this. He is worried about how to make our (pure) ideas known without reckoning with the problem of how to link up with the masses in their struggles. The result is the obvious sectarianism that characterizes his entire political line.

This becomes even clearer when on page 00 he says that a Marxist party must "always . . . raise the political consciousness of the masses to the maximum." This is utopian. "To the maximum" means that the proletariat becomes conscious of the need to take power. But these conditions—that is, revolutionary conditions—depend not only on the subjective factor (the party, its influence, etc.), but on the objective factor of the class struggle. No party, even if it is a mass party, can "decree" a revolutionary situation. Therefore, it cannot "always" attempt to "raise the political consciousness of the masses to the maximum." The *raison d'être* of our Transitional Program is precisely to be able to take into account at what level we can try to raise the political consciousness of the masses in a given concrete situation.

As to the elections in the USA, Comrade Montero commits a clumsy error when he asserts that electoral abstention there in 1972 was "very significant." Apparently he did not read *The Militant*, *Intercontinental Press*, or *Voz Marxista* with respect to the elections, as in the latter an article was published in December in issue No. 16, in which we make the point that the electoral abstention rate in the USA has always been high.

To state, as does Comrade Montero, that abstention or a boycott should have been called for—Montero doesn't indicate which of the two he prefers—shows that he has not borne in mind *the causes* of the high rate of abstention (46 percent compared to the usual level of 40 percent). Montero idealizes the political level of the student masses on this question.

It is false that the SWP's 1972 electoral campaign was "a complete failure." In reality, it was a big success with respect to our objective: How to take advantage of the elections to spread our ideas and win new militants and sympathizers. In this sense it was in fact a success.

It is inadmissible for Comrade Montero to irresponsibly make false statements like all these we have pointed out

without first confirming their veracity, as this can confuse and disorient any recently recruited member who hasn't yet had the time to carefully study the documents concerning these questions. We cannot allow the fact that our recently recruited members aren't very familiar with our history and our program to be bartered and exploited. On the contrary, the characteristics of the composition of our group during this period place a high level of responsibility on us for assuring that all members are able to fully acquaint themselves with the facts, the positions of each side in the internal discussions, etc., so that they can in this way fulfill their obligation of participating in working out the policies of our group.

The Case of Argentina

Comrade Montero begins his article by identifying himself with the policy of the PRT-ERP of Argentina. As we know, the PRT-ERP recently divided into various splinters. This atomization is the result of the enormous contradiction between its dogmatic, schematic policy since 1968 on the one hand, and the growth of the class struggle in Argentina on the other hand. As of late, Montero has not indicated with which of the groups that allege to be the true ERP and/or PRT he is in solidarity; whether with the PRT-ERP led by Santucho, an open renegade from Trotskyism; the ERP-22, now following a progressive bourgeois (Peronist) orientation; or with one of the grouplets such as that of Domecq, the Leninist Tendency, etc.

Comrade Montero proceeds to accuse the SWP of "publicly" attacking the PRT-ERP in its organs. We should above all include in the record that it has been the SWP comrades, as well as the Argentine comrades of the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST) who have done exceptional revolutionary work in solidarity with the PRT-ERP comrades in the face of the heavy repression of which they have been the victims. The SWP comrades have organized and promoted the effective work of the United States Committee for Justice to Latin American Political Prisoners (USLA), whose periodical, the *USLA Reporter*, has carried many reports on the repression in Argentina. The USLA has organized tours throughout the USA for Argentine activists to give talks denouncing Lanusse's dictatorial regime and the crimes he has committed, such as the Trelew massacre. The Canadian comrades have not lagged behind in this campaign of solidarity.

But our revolutionary solidarity in the face of the repression does not free us from the responsibility of defending revolutionary-Marxist methods of struggle. When the Sallustro kidnapping occurred, the SWP, Argentine, and Canadian comrades were among those who made it known that they were waiting for the United Secretariat to issue a statement in solidarity with the PRT-ERP in the face of the repression, but at the same time pointing out that these methods—kidnappings and executions—are not revolutionary Marxist methods of struggle in the concrete conditions in Argentina. That is, it was anticipated that the United Secretariat would issue a public criticism of these methods that are alien to our movement, similar to the statement issued on February 6, 1972, publicly criticizing the participation of the Partido Obrero

Revolucionario—Revolutionary Workers Party (POR-González), Bolivian section of the Fourth International, in the Frente Revolucionario Antimperialista (FRA—Anti-imperialist Revolutionary Front). The FRA, which included progressive bourgeois sectors through General Torres, etc., proposed to "form a government," and stated that all participating organizations in the front had to submit to the discipline and program of the front.

However, the United Secretariat didn't make a statement on the kidnapping, although it had had worldwide repercussions. The Political Committee of the SWP issued a statement on April 3, 1973, hoping that at its April 15-16 meeting the United Secretariat would pass a similar resolution. However, at that meeting the majority neither condoned nor condemned the kidnapping and execution of Sallustro. It *abstained* from taking a political position, public or internal, and rejected a proposal from the minority of the US to issue a public statement similar to the statements of the SWP and the Canadian comrades of the League for Socialist Action—Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière (LSA/LSO). The SWP statement said, in part, the following:

"In place of powerful actions by the masses themselves the ERP is attempting to substitute small actions by a tiny group. Their hopes are placed on these actions serving as examples to the people living in the slums. They hope that the dramatic nature of the 'exemplary actions' will inspire the masses to begin moving toward toppling the old regime and establishing a government of their own.

"In reality, the work of bringing the masses into the political arena in all their invincible power differs qualitatively from such notions. It requires deep involvement in the daily life of the masses. It requires patient struggling, under the guidance of a revolutionary-socialist party, to project demands directly linked to the economic, social, and political needs of the masses, and to organize support for these demands in such a way as to raise the self-confidence of the masses and take them through transitional steps into the road of a socialist revolution." [*International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. X, no. 2, February 1973.]

It should be pointed out that the SWP document, like that of the LSA/LSO, affirms full solidarity with the PRT-ERP in face of the repression and recognizes the courage and self-sacrificing attitude of the revolutionists of the ERP.

Which is the Real PRT?

We will not go into an account here of the policy of the PRT-ERP. This is well documented in "Argentina and Bolivia: The Balance Sheet," by Comrades Hugo Blanco, Peter Camejo, Hansen, Anibal Lorenzo, and Moreno [*IIDB*, Vol. X, No. 1]. Every member should already have a copy of this document.

The reality, including the Argentine reality, has mercilessly struck the mistaken strategical approaches of the PRT-ERP. At the same time that the PRT-ERP is splitting because of the internal convulsions resulting from this reality that they did not foresee, our comrades of the PST were able at a very early stage to estimate the bour-

geoisie's turn toward an electoral solution (a product of the semi-insurrections in Córdoba, Rosario, Mendoza, etc.). The net result has been an unprecedented rise and growth of the PST, transforming it into the strongest Trotskyist organization we have ever had in Latin America. The PST's experience in the recent electoral campaign is particularly valuable for our work here in the present conjuncture.

Comrade Montero and the BR

The BR group [Bandera Roja—Red Flag], which expounds "Long Live Marxism Leninism, the thought of Mao Tsetung!", is characterized by its dogmatic application of armed struggle, relegating to second place the construction of a revolutionary party with mass influence. Comrade Montero considers it the organization closest to us. Surely, it is the political organization that Comrade Montero finds closest to *his* positions. For us the BR is a dogmatic, ultraleft group isolated from the masses, without a perspective for political development in the class struggle in Venezuela. And like Maoism internationally, there is a deep chasm between what they *say* and what they *do*. We will expand upon and document this estimation in the documents that will be prepared for the national conference in August.

All our members are well acquainted with how those who follow BR's slogans have tried to sabotage public meetings, including one of ours on March 2, the Popular Assembly against repression on March 14 at "23 de Enero," and the meeting that we organized jointly for May Day with the Workers Class Front, MAS [Movimiento al Socialismo—Movement Toward Socialism], MIR [Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria—Movement of the Revolutionary Left], and others at the Royal Cinema.

Two Methods, Two Roads

Comrade Montero says that he is "in frank disagreement with the direction the policies of our organization in Venezuela have taken."

And what is that direction if not that of working to construct a revolutionary workers combat party; to attain a primitive accumulation of cadres that enables us to participate forcefully and effectively in workers struggles, and not just propagandistically?

Our line is for working, fighting, and actively participating in the construction of the Venezuelan section of the Fourth International. Comrade Montero has taken a different course.

Note to Comrades Frank, Maitan, and Mandel

A brief note to the above comrades so that they will better be able to understand all the lessons and contradictions: Comrade Montero's article and his political activity is the fruit borne from your line on Latin America in three test years in Venezuela.

May 3, 1973