

TO ALL DELEGATES

Dear Comrades,

Attached is correspondence concerning the invitation to the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International to observe this convention.

Comradely,

Mary Alice Waters

Mary-Alice Waters
SWP National Office

Dear Comrade Hansen,

Our Political Bureau has discussed your January 2, 1975, statement and assigned me to reply to it.

The Political Bureau of the OCI considers this statement concerning our proposal to discuss our differences to be a positive one. By accurately reporting the facts about the relations between the SWP and the OCI and the proposals of the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International to the United Secretariat, it blocks maneuvers aimed at hindering the development of the discussion. In addition, it is correct in its political estimate of our objectives and motives.

Indeed, as we have written -- and as we reiterated at the time of the October 15 interview -- the basis of our intervention is that among those who claim adherence to the Fourth International, the problems have now reached maturity and can be settled.

In other words, we are convinced, as the Organizing Committee's letter of May 28, 1973, states, that "for the first time since 1952-53, the current discussion, which encompasses all the major issues of principle, strategy and tactics, presents the possibility of resuming, on a new basis and with considerably enriched international experience, the debate that led to the split in the Fourth International, founded in 1938 and reconstituted in 1943-46."

That is why, for our part, we place no preliminary conditions on the discussion, leaving the United Secretariat free to decide on the agenda. We are aware that regardless of the starting point, the discussion will inevitably end up on the principled issues raised in the 1950-53 crisis, which have not yet been resolved.

Our goal is the reconstruction of the Fourth International on the basis of the principles of the program of the Fourth International, as we explained in our letter of October 10, 1973.

We repeated our proposals again in the letter adopted in December 1974 by the Organizing Committee's International Bureau, which we asked you to pass on to the United Secretariat: "The entire experience accumulated in the class struggle has confirmed the soundness of the basis on which the Fourth International was founded. But, far from converting references to the transitional program and its method into a formality, this fact makes its defense crucially important. Only on the basis of its principles can we find a solution for the long, deep crisis the Fourth International has undergone. . . . In addition, the International Bureau declares that, whatever agenda you decide on for the preparatory discussion for your next Congress, we are prepared to participate in it."

In the same letter, the International Bureau stated that it was taking up Politica Obrera's proposal for a joint international campaign by the organizations affiliated to the United Secretariat and those of the Organizing Committee against anti-working-class terrorism in Argentina.

We regard it as a favorable development for the international discussion and for the interests of the Fourth International that the SWP, taking its stand from the point of view of "the development of all the organizations claiming adherence to Trotskyism," has publicly taken the responsibility of describing the OCI's proposals as opening the door to a "fruitful dialogue."

If we understand you correctly, an obstacle lies in the fact that some of our former characterizations of members of the United Secretariat, particularly of leaders of the French section, were "excessive." It goes without saying that the evaluations we make or were able to make of currents or of political leaders claiming adherence to the Fourth International are themselves part of the discussion and can be put in question.

But you are concerned that such evaluations may still be "echoed" in our press, and that in this event, you say, "it would be hard to avoid concluding that the OCI is engaging in a short-term maneuver rather than moving toward a basic discussion with an open mind." As an example, you cite an article which appeared in Informations Ouvrieres for November 14, 1974, in which a member of the United Secretariat was described as a "sycophant" and accused of having written "perfidiously" concerning the Hungarian revolution.

In your statement, you indicate that we are "serious revolutionists." You will admit that one aspect of this characterization is not to bring forward the personal side or to consider the positions previously held by anyone on either side to be an indelible brand.

Polemics have always been a natural form of expression in discussions between organizations and militants claiming adherence to Marxism. And in polemics, epithets are often harsh. "Sycophant" would have been a mild designation from Lenin's pen when he was polemicizing against Trotsky at the time of the August bloc.

But epithets are not essential, and for our part we are prepared to make all the accommodations in form, if they will permit a discussion to take place, which, as you say, must be "basic."

We shall take two examples to illustrate our position. We have expressed clearly our opinion of the significance of the Tenth World Congress resolution on "armed struggle": we have defined it as contrary to the Marxist principles of the Fourth International. And when we see that Ernest Mandel, who approves this orientation, declares at the same time in a debate with the right-wing Social Democrat Mansholt, "We do not advocate

violence or terrorism," is it not difficult to consider his behavior to be that of a responsible leader?

Another example: The French student syndicalist organization, UNEF, has been divided since 1971. The Stalinist fraction provoked a split because they could not tolerate a tendency led by OCI militants to gain recognition as a majority and to struggle to reconstruct the UNEF as a trade-union organization, after it had been severely damaged by leftist elements.

This year UNEF decided to participate in some university elections. It was clear that this signified a test of political strength between us and the Stalinists. Furthermore, the PCF apparatus understood it as such. We consider it a political victory that the slates of the tendency we supported gained a vote that stood at 75 percent of what the Stalinists obtained (31,000 votes for the slates we supported, 48,000 for those supported by the PCF).

One may certainly disagree about the advisability of running in such elections, or even about the need for a student union. But when the LCR's organ Rouge, which in earlier years simply ignored these elections (when the slates led by the CP and the traditional conservative slates were the only ones), advises a "boycott" and justifies it by the fact that the Stalinists and our comrades are nothing but bureaucratic manipulators, we are compelled to state that (aside from the epithets applied to us) this political identification of us with the Stalinists is a service rendered to the latter.

To come to the article you quote, we readily grant that the epithet of sycophant applied to Ernest Germain adds nothing to it. But eliminating it does not take away much. The designation "perfidiously" is applied to a statement that Imre Nagy yielded "without discrimination" to the pressure of the revolution. And what follows the quoted passage shows it clearly: it is the Stalinist version used by the bureaucracy to try to justify the second intervention, that of being "outflanked from the right."

The heart of the matter is that in that December 1956 article, Ernest Germain contrasts the "spasmodic" development of the political revolution in Hungary with the "Polish victory;" Gomulka's damning of the political revolution in Poland is considered a victory, while the dangers of an "elementary, spontaneous explosion" are denounced.

Furthermore, it would be unfair to bear down on Germain alone for this. It was the basic position of the International Secretariat of Germain, but also that of Pablo, of Frank, of Maitan, which was affirmed in particular in their position with respect to the workers insurrection in East Berlin in June 1953, a position fought by the International Committee that was formed following your National Committee's open letter.

Thus we cannot consider that the balance sheet of Ernest Germain on the question of the political revolution is unambiguous.

But that is not the main point. The essential thing is that, in our opinion, these positions of "eighteen years ago" remain current, because they are at the root of the current orientation of the majority tendency. When the Belgian section's organ, La Gauche, writes that the Portuguese Communist party has "one foot in reformism and the other in the revolutionary struggle," the same method, contrary to the basic heritage of Trotskyism, lies at the bottom.

In addition, what would show that the OCI is not engaged in some short-term maneuver is that if that were so we would conceal the fact that, in our opinion, there are within the United Secretariat and its organizations currents that place in question the programmatic basis of Trotskyism, as I personally stated at the October 15 interview. Having said this, it goes without saying that we are prepared to modify the form, especially in our public statements, if that would allow the discussion to open.

Dear Comrade Hansen, now I would like in conclusion to come to what is central to me and to the whole OCI leadership. I have just referred to Portugal. The proletarian revolution is developing in Portugal and is on the agenda throughout Europe. In an international context, the Portuguese revolution occupies a place similar to that held by the Spanish revolution and the revolutionary rising in France in 1936. At that time our international movement under Trotsky's leadership, in spite of its difficulties, differences and splits at the national level, acted like an international political unit and was ready for action.

Today, because the differences relate to the most vital issues of the proletarian revolution itself, the Fourth International cannot assert itself politically as a coherent force. That is why, to give only one example, the Portuguese LCI declares in its electoral manifesto that it is necessary "to bar capitalist reaction from all the roads (even electoral) to control of the state apparatus." Which means that the state apparatus in existence today is "neutral," that the task is not that of proletarian revolution, of the destruction of the bourgeois state. Where are the principles on which our movement rests?

That is why we are so insistent on opening this frank, deep international discussion and why we place no formal condition on how it begins. Only through this discussion will the Fourth International be able to function on the basis of democratic centralism and within the framework of the principles of the transitional program.

Let me add that we believe that the concrete historical development of the Fourth International has created a situation in which organizations like the SWP and the OCI have special responsibilities.

That is why, in reiterating the proposal made by the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth Interna-

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tional in its December 27 letter, that of participating in the preparatory discussion for your next international congress, I appeal to you on behalf of the OCI leadership -- we believe that organizing a real exchange of views between the leadership of the SWP and that of the OCI would represent an extremely important, positive step.

For my part, I am prepared to travel to the United States this summer, preferably during the month of August, to conduct such a responsible discussion around an agenda which we can draw up together, in whatever form and circumstances you believe to be best.

With fraternal greetings,
for the OCI Political Bureau
P. Lambert

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14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
June 5, 1975

Dear Comrade Lambert,

Thank you for your letter again outlining your position regarding a discussion of the balance sheet to be drawn on the internal differences in the world Trotskyist movement going back several decades. For the moment I will not take up the points you raise in your letter save for two items.

One is the importance of a comradely, open-minded attitude, particularly in public polemics. It is true that revolutionary-Marxists are characteristically not given to restraint in debating differences. However, this is rarely justified inside the movement, in my opinion. And certainly it is out of place if there is a narrowing of political differences, however deep the differences may be on other levels.

The other item is your reference to Comrade Mandel's denial to Mansholt that he "advocates" terrorism. Comrade Mandel made a similar denial at greater length in his reply to Newsweek, which was published in the October 9, 1972, issue of Intercontinental Press. His current statement should be weighed in that context.

In the final part of your letter, you indicate your readiness to visit the United States this summer to discuss a possible agenda and the forms and conditions of a responsible discussion. The leadership of the Socialist Workers party would be opposed to taking up such a question unilaterally. A thoroughgoing discussion such as you envisage would necessarily involve the United Secretariat and would have to be taken up there.

If you plan, despite this, to visit the United States in August, you and any other comrades of the Comité d'Organisation would be welcome to attend as observers at the open sessions of the convention of the SWP, which is scheduled for that month. In case you are interested, I would be glad to send you the necessary details.

Fraternally yours,
s/Joseph Hansen

cc: United Secretariat

ORGANISATION COMMUNISTE INTERNACIONALISTE
(pour la Reconstruction de la 4^e Internationale)

Paris, June 16, 1975
[received July 12]

Dear Comrade Hansen,

Thank you for your letter of June 5. It seems perfectly normal to me that the SWP leadership thinks that the discussion we are proposing cannot begin unilaterally between the SWP and the OCI, that it must be conducted from the beginning with the United Secretariat. As you know, we have no objection to such a discussion. I would simply underscore the fact that in the proposal we made to you we left the SWP leadership free to determine the agenda and the form of the discussion we would like to have; that is, it could decide the breadth or limitations of the exchange of views. . . .

But that is not the most important thing. Politically the most important is the difficulty, to one degree or another, of beginning the discussion otherwise than publicly in our different newspapers and magazines without at least a preliminary agreement between the organizations on the questions to be debated.

As you know, we first proposed to the United Secretariat that a discussion be opened, and we repeated our proposal several times. We did this at the October 15 meeting at which you were present. It is the United Secretariat that has refused to open the debate and has remained silent since that October 15 meeting. If negotiations came to an end it was not owing to the OCI.

In this context and in the face of what we believe to be a serious situation for our international movement, we proposed a discussion with the SWP leadership.

Let me remind you that at the same time, in the arena of the class struggle in France and thus in relation to possible common actions, we invited the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire to participate in joint meetings we organized on April 27. The LCR declined that invitation. So we wrote to the LCR again, but so far there has been no response to our letter.

As I wrote to you, we are prepared to make every formal accomodation to avoid giving any false pretext for refusing to conduct a discussion with us, and in all sincerity I believe that for our part our press has given no evidence of exaggerated or violent polemics in recent months. It would be difficult to say as much for the "form" used by Rouge, for example, in its polemic against the OCI.

But whatever the tone or the "fraternal" form given to the discussion, the fact remains that immediate political differences

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--which we think involve the very principles of the Fourth International--are deepening within the United Secretariat and its organizations, as well as within the ranks of "all the organizations claiming adherence to Trotskyism" (to repeat the expression used in your statement of January 2, 1975). The positions some have taken in the name of Trotskyism and the Fourth International on such vital problems of the class struggle as Portugal and Vietnam cannot help but lead to catastrophes for our movement as a whole unless they are checked by a discussion that gets at the root of these positions.

Taking into account the SWP leadership's decision concerning the discussion we suggested, I shall not come to the United States.

On the other hand, we are receptive to the invitation to the OCI to attend your Convention in the capacity of observer.

Our Political Bureau has assigned a member of the Political Bureau to attend your Convention as an observer. He will also represent our paper, Informations Ouvrières. So please send us the details you mentioned in your letter.

In another connection, a longtime member of our Political Bureau will be in New York July 29-30 following a trip to Canada. He will contact the SWP on his arrival, since obviously he is eager to turn that brief stay to good advantage by meeting the comrades of your leadership.

Fraternally,

/s/

P. Lambert

P.S. A comrade filled me in on his telephone conversation with you. Thank you for giving us permission to publish Trotsky's article on freedom of the press. It is a precious weapon in the battle we must wage against a powerful Stalinist offensive.

August 1, 1975

Pierre Lambert
Organization Communiste Internationaliste
Paris, France

Dear Comrade Lambert,

Thank you for your letter of June 16, which we received July 12.

We are glad to learn that a comrade will be able to attend our convention which will take place August 17-21 in Cleveland, Ohio. If the comrade will contact our national office on his arrival in North America we will give him all the necessary information concerning travel and accommodations.

We have heard nothing from the other comrade you mentioned, so we assume that he was unable to make his anticipated stopover in New York.

We were pleased to see that you were able to run Trotsky's article on freedom of the press in Informations Ouvrières. It is not necessary to ask for permission, as you did. Since it was initiated, one of IP's functions has been to provide a press service for workers publications internationally. All that is asked is that credit be given as to the source.

Fraternally,
s/ Joseph Hansen

cc: United Secretariat

TRANSLATION

TRANSLATION

REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST LEAGUE
FRENCH SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Paris
June 29, 1975

To the Executive Committee
of the SWP

Dear Comrades,

The enclosed letter was discussed and approved at the most recent meeting of the ICR Central Committee on June 29. It concerns the letter from Comrade J. Hansen to Lambert, a member of the leadership of the OCI, inviting him to the coming convention of the SWP.

Awaiting a rapid response, we send our fraternal greetings.

For the Political Bureau:
Alain Krivine

REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST LEAGUE
FRENCH SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Paris
June 29

To the Executive Committee
of the SWP

Dear Comrades,

The United Secretariat has forwarded to us a copy of Comrade J. Hansen's answer to an undated letter from Lambert.

We agree with Comrade Hansen when he writes that any discussion with the OCI or its Organizing Committee is a matter that primarily concerns the United Secretariat. We will not fail to make our position known on this matter when it comes up on the USec agenda.

However, we do not think your invitation to Lambert to attend the coming convention of the SWP is an internal affair of the SWP. We think that this is also a matter for discussion in the USec and, in particular, that it concerns the LCR (French section of the Fourth International) very directly.

You know that since May 1968, without going back further, the relationship between the LCR and the OCI has been essentially a hostile one because of the grave political differences that exist between the two organizations and because of the OCI's conduct in the class struggle in France. We have never refused to meet with all the groups on the far left with a view to carrying out joint actions. This includes the OCI despite its scandalous conduct in May 1968, the most important event in the history of the French workers movement in decades. The Lambertists, let us not forget, called for abandoning the barricades in the Quartier Latin. During the six weeks of the crisis and general strike, they never issued calls for demonstrating for the overthrow of the government. This got them a clean bill of health from the Conseil d'Etat, when the other revolutionary organizations were banned by the government.

Unfortunately, there have been very few meetings with the OCI and still less common actions, less than with any other organization. The reasons for this can be easily understood when you consider the following facts.

Throughout the Vietnam war, the Lambertists hardly ever participated in solidarity demonstrations. They even wrote once that the Vietnamese struggle was hopeless. They showed a particular predilection for denouncing the Vietnamese leaders, even on the eve of the liberation of Saigon, accusing them of not wanting to take the city!

In the 1974 presidential election, they supported Mitterrand on the first round, against our candidate and the Lutte Ouvrière candidate. Before in 1973, in the legislative elections, after several months of tripartite discussions including us and Lutte Ouvrière, the aim of which was to reach an agreement on a geographic distribution of candidates, they broke off the negotiations to run a few candidates only in places where we and Lutte Ouvrière had candidates, in order deliberately to damage these campaigns.

As regards Portugal (where they in fact have no organization) their articles and leaflets in Paris have "unconditionally" supported Soares' party and presented the slogan "All Power to the Constituent Assembly." Recently, they participated in anti-Franco demonstrations under the slogan "Long Live the Republic!"

Last year in the Force Ouvrière convention, they voted for the leadership report given by the General Secretary Bergeron, who is opposed to any unity in action with the CGR [Confédération Générale du Travail] -- Général Confédération of Labor, the CP-controlled union federation and who has acted openly as a strike-breaker against the printing workers at the Parisien Libéré, which at present is the main test of strength in the class struggle in France. Out of the last three issues of the Lambertist organ, we find a short note in the first saying that the attitude of Force Ouvrière in this strike is "unacceptable" (such a moderate term is not usual in their polemics against us); the following issue says nothing about the strike, and the last issue has an article whose fire is directed entirely against the union the strikers belong to and which is defending a trade-union gain.

Moreover, they have called the LIP strike leader Piaget, an agent of the bosses and the Catholic hierarchy.

Let us also refer in a few words to their methods in the workers movement. Like Healy, the Lambertists habitually poison political discussions, including those that lead to splits in their ranks, by hurling accusations about people being agents of the bourgeoisie or the Kremlin. They have done so against us. Thus, in their commentary on the last convention of the LCR, they put us in the category of "all the forces that defend the social relations of capitalist production," saying that our role was to "betray the revolution in the name of the Fourth International." So, after this no credibility can be given to any accusations they raise.

The Lambertists also habitually use violence within the workers movement, especially against the far-left organizations. They have done so again recently against a grouplet that broke from them.

But while these few indications explain the paucity of common actions with the OCI, this is not the essential, fundamental reason for our objection to the invitation you have sent to Lambert and his people.

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You have always said that only your country's reactionary laws prevented you from formally being members of the Fourth International. This is why we have always considered you as morally an integral part of the Fourth International, that is, as a part of the World Party of the Socialist Revolution, whose existing framework all members respect and in which all members are in solidarity with the other organizations of the Fourth International in other countries, not just in general solidarity in the struggle against capitalism but also against the dissident groups that have broken with the Fourth International. We have no objections in principle to inviting formations outside the Fourth International to a convention -- we do it -- but in the context of the conception we jointly hold of the Fourth International, we do not think that it is possible to invite a group without first knowing the opinion of the section in the country in question.

The invitation to Lambert, in whatever form it is made, will inevitably become known publicly and interpreted by everyone, starting with the OCI, as a political act. Everyone will conclude that the SWP intends to put the OCI and the ICR on the same level. And this conclusion will be correct. In the past of the Trotskyist movement, this was the interpretation given to the invitation issued by Nin and his organization to a representative of a dissident group to attend the convention of the Spanish organization in March 1922 with the same status as the delegates of the International Secretariat and the French section at the time, and Trotsky was the first to so interpret it. This is how the members of the ICR will understand it today. They will understand that at the very time they are carrying out an audacious decision -- launching a daily, the first daily published by a section of the Fourth International -- at a time when they have the right to expect the moral support of all those who justly claim to be members of the Fourth International, the SWP leadership has put them on the same level as the OCI. They will understand that at the very time when you want to celebrate the 1963 reunification at your convention, a celebration we would like to join in, you are giving aid to a group, which along with Healy, has been the most vicious foe of reunification and which has not given up its intention to destroy it. The OCI is seeking only to sharpen the differences and tensions in the International and to this end it will use the invitation given it to redouble its struggle against what it calls the "currents that challenge the programmatic bases of Trotskyism" "within the USec and its organizations."

For these reasons we were surprised by your move. We appeal to you vigorously to change a decision that puts in question whether we can attend your convention. We ask you to inform us as soon as possible of your final decision.

copy to the United Secretariat
of the Fourth International

Fraternally,
The Central Committee of the
Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire
(French Section of the Fourth
International)

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July 28, 1975

To: the Central Committee of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire
(French Section of the Fourth International)

Dear Comrades,

We received your letter of June 29 indicating that you may not attend our August 17-21 convention because of the invitation extended by the SWP Political Committee to the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International to observe the open sessions. We were sorry to learn that you had placed a question mark over your attendance. We hope our reply will clarify the matter and that a sizable delegation from your leadership will be present in accordance with the practice you have followed in recent years.

For our part we were genuinely surprised by your reaction. We consider our invitation to the Organizing Committee to be within the general framework of the unanimous decisions taken by the United Secretariat last October and December. Since this essential framework of the previous decisions of the United Secretariat (which the SWP leadership agrees with) is not referred to in your letter to us, perhaps it would be worthwhile to begin by recalling those decisions.

At the meeting of the United Secretariat last October 12-13, fraternal observers of the SWP reported on the new request from the leadership of the Organization Communiste Internationaliste, on behalf of the Organizing Committee to Reconstruct the Fourth International, to open a political discussion with the United Secretariat. After considering the request and the background leading up to it, the United Secretariat unanimously agreed to send a delegation to meet with the OCI leadership to hear their proposals. It was agreed that this United Secretariat delegation should include at least one of the leaders of the FCR. It was further agreed to propose that internal bulletins be exchanged, and that the possibility be considered of collaboration in areas such as defense work and publishing projects for Trotskyist literature in the various East European languages. Several members of the political bureau of the French section participated in this United Secretariat discussion and voted for taking this step.

Comrades in the leadership of the ICR are familiar with the October 15 meeting with the OCI leadership as three reports on it -- one by Pierre Rousset, one by Joseph Hansen and one by Francois DeMassot -- were circulated in the FCR last fall.

As proposed by the United Secretariat, arrangements were made to exchange internal bulletins.

At the November 16-17, and December 17, 1974, meetings of the United Secretariat there was further discussion on the steps to be taken in response to the request for political discussion as spelled out by Comrade Lambert at the October 15 meeting. There were differences among the members of the United Secretariat on how to interpret the overtures from the OCI leadership. Some thought it was nothing but a maneuver to try to exploit and deepen the political differences within the Fourth International; others thought the evidence indicated that the OCI leadership was sincere in its desire to participate in the discussion of questions of prime political importance taking place within the Fourth International.

Despite differing evaluations of the OCI's intentions, however, there was again unanimous agreement on the next step. The United Secretariat decided to take up two points with the OCI leadership before proceeding to further discussions. The first was clarification of some statements open to misinterpretation in the internal report by Francois DeMassot referred to above. The second was a commitment by the OCI leadership to cease using public characterizations of leaders of the international that are out of place if they are serious about establishing a framework for comradely debate.

In addition, comrades of the leadership of the French section felt strongly that a public statement by the leadership of the SWP was in order, in light of the publicity given to the OCI's contacts with the United Secretariat by opponents of the international and their accusations of a secret intrigue between the SWP and OCI. We were dubious about the wisdom of such a public move, but the opinions of the French leadership were of concern to us, and we acquiesced. The SWP Political Bureau issued a statement, published in the January 13, 1975, issue of Intercontinental Press. Since, to our knowledge, this has not been published for the information of the LCR membership, or commented on by the leadership, we have enclosed a copy.

As you can see, the statement details the history of the contacts between the United Secretariat and the Organizing Committee and asks the OCI leadership to alter the character of its public polemics.

The letter of Comrade Pierre Lambert is a reply to the statement of the SWP Political Bureau. This reply clearly provides additional confirmation of the desire of the Organizing Committee to remove obstacles standing in the way of a political discussion.

This was the context in which the SWP Political Committee asked Joe Hansen to answer Comrade Lambert's letter, specifying that we continue to be opposed to unilateral discussions between the SWP and OCI, but would take the matter up with the United Secretariat. As Comrade Lambert indicated he might be in North

America in the month of August, we extended an invitation to him or any other comrades representing the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International to observe the open sessions of our convention.

In regard to your letter of June 29 objecting to this invitation we would like to make several observations.

1. You note that the invitation is of particular concern to the ICR (French section of the Fourth International). We of course agree with you that the OCI is the strongest component of the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International, and in that sense the invitation is of interest to the French section. But we would remind you that there are significant groups affiliated to the Organizing Committee in other countries, including Canada, Mexico, Britain, Israel, and Argentina, where there are also sections and sympathizing organizations of the Fourth International which are directly affected. That is why we consider the question of contacts with the Organizing Committee or leaders of the OCI acting on behalf of the Organizing Committee, to be a matter for consideration by the United Secretariat, not simply the French section.

Our invitation was extended not to the OCI per se, but to the Organizing Committee -- an international current that considers itself part of the world Trotskyist movement and with whom the United Secretariat unanimously decided to investigate possibilities for certain kinds of joint work; with whom the United Secretariat unanimously agreed to exchange all internal discussion material; and with whom the United Secretariat agreed to explore the fruitfulness of more extended political discussion.

We would note that other sections directly concerned, such as the Canadian section, expressed an opinion opposite to that now voiced by the ICR. At the July 1975 United Secretariat meeting they pointed out that those observing the SWP convention might be influenced enough by what they heard and saw to consider it desirable for the groups affiliated to the Organizing Committee to move more actively towards the United Secretariat.

While there were differing views within the United Secretariat concerning the degree to which this invitation advanced the process initiated by the earlier United Secretariat decisions the July United Secretariat meeting decided to express no opinion in disagreement with the invitation.

2. The largest part of your letter deals with an enumeration of political differences that have divided you from the OCI for the last seven years, "without going back further," as you say. We would only note that these are beside the point. A similar list could have been drawn up any time in the last decade. But again, you leave out what has changed: the disintegration

of the former International Committee including the split between Healy and Lambert, between Lambert and Varga, between Wolhforth and Healy, between Healy, Thornett and Black, and so on; the effect of the increasing pace of the class struggle on the forces around the Organizing Committee; the effect of the continued growth and development of the Fourth International; and the effect of the proof of our ability since 1969 to conduct a far-ranging political debate in a comradely way despite sharp differences. You also leave out something else that has changed -- the attitude of the OCI leadership as shown by their request to open a political discussion with us; their willingness to accept whatever format or agenda for discussion we prefer; and their demonstrated willingness to remove obstacles to this discussion by altering the character and tone of their polemics. These were the new factors that prompted the United Secretariat to respond in the first place.

Under such conditions, to reply by simply repeating a list of political differences that may be under process of alteration, and to refuse on those grounds to discuss, would be a response more appropriate to dead-end factionalists than to revolutionary Marxists. The conclusions that would be drawn by the entire workers movement is that we are not confident or capable enough to confront the OCI politically or that we are beginning to act more like a sect than a Leninist leadership determined to build the Fourth International.

You seem to recognize this problem when you state, "this is not the essential, fundamental reason for our objection to the invitation."

3. If we understand you correctly, your fundamental objection is that you consider our invitation to be a breach of the norms of democratic centralism because it is not "possible to invite a group without first knowing the opinion of the section in the country in question."

But the fact is that the leadership of the LCR voted in favor of the course set by the United Secretariat. Our invitation to the Organizing Committee comes within this framework and has nothing to do with challenging the norm you outline.

4. The invitation to the Organizing Committee is, as you say, a political act, but there is no basis for your assertion that the SWP thereby intends to put the OCI and the LCR on the same level. As everyone on the left knows, the LCR and SWP are part of a common international current. Were it not for reactionary legislation in the United States we would be the American section of the Fourth International. Representatives of our respective leaderships regularly attend each other's conventions and national committee meetings, not merely as observers at the open sessions but as fraternal delegates to whom the courtesy of voice has been extended when requested.

To avoid any misunderstanding owing to incomplete information, we should call attention to the fact that unlike the conventions of the French section, our conventions are generally open. Not only elected delegates, but all members of the SWP and YSA, selected sympathizers, and members of any section or sympathizing organization of the Fourth International are all invited to attend. At this year's convention we anticipate that more than a hundred nonmembers will be present and possibly even reporters from major daily newspapers.

Under the circumstances, an invitation to the Organizing Committee to send a delegation to listen to the oral reports and debates, which are based on the written discussion that has already been made available to them by the United Secretariat, cannot reasonably be construed as a decision by the SWP leadership to place the OCI in the same category as the LCR.

5. Your reference to Nin's invitation to Collinet of the Gauche Communiste in France to represent the French section of the International Left Opposition at the convention of the Spanish Left Opposition in March 1932 does not appear pertinent in our opinion. Did the International Secretariat, with the agreement of Molinier, Frank and Naville, decide in late 1931 to meet with Rosmer's group to explore possibilities for political discussion and areas of collaboration? Did the International Secretariat decide to give Rosmer's group all internal discussion material of the Left Opposition and its Spanish section? Did Nin keep the International Secretariat informed of his contacts with the Gauche Communiste? Did he send copies of all correspondence and related documents to the French section and the International Secretariat? Did the International Secretariat delegation (Molinier, Frank and Naville) boycott the Spanish convention when it was agreed to seat Collinet as an observer, while they were seated as fraternal delegates? The answer to each question is, No. Such details, all of which are pertinent to the international framework, but which you fail to mention in your letter, are rather important.

6. You seem to imply that our action is particularly dubious in light of the decision of the LCR to launch a daily paper. The exact connection between the two is not very clear to us. In any case, we are certainly pleased that the French section of the Fourth International today feels itself strong enough to take the step of publishing a daily and we wish you the best of success in the venture. In light of this considerable expansion of the Trotskyist propaganda apparatus in France, however, it seems to us that it would be desirable to seek to mobilize support for this undertaking from all sections of the French left, including organizations that claim to be Trotskyist.

We thus see no contradiction between launching a daily and responding to overtures from a group that might decide to move further in our direction.

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For all these reasons we think the objections you raise in your letter do not warrant withdrawing the invitation to the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International to observe the open sessions of our convention. In fact it would be difficult to offer a reasonable explanation for such a turnaround and it would open the United Secretariat and the SWP to charges of bad faith.

We repeat that we sincerely hope that representatives of the Political Bureau of the LCR will attend our convention. They will be welcomed as fraternal delegates and accorded all the courtesies that have unfailingly been extended to the French section at every past convention of the Socialist Workers Party.

With comradely greetings,

/s/

Mary-Alice Waters
for the SWP Political Committee

cc: United Secretariat

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
February 29, 1975

TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND BOSTON WORK DIRECTORS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is a communication from the YSA national office to YSA locals which should be shared with party Boston work directors.

Key immediate tasks in building support for the May 17 march are: 1) To encourage chapters of the National Student Coalition Against Racism to approach the NAACP chapters in each area, to secure their endorsement of May 17 and to discuss best ways to build citywide coalitions that involve Black community groups, trade unions, women's liberation organizations and others. 2) To secure endorsements of May 17 from the same broad range of groups and prominent individuals. Such groups and individuals can telephone the Boston NAACP for further information, if this will help. Endorsements should be sent to both the Boston NAACP and the National Student Coalition Against Racism (addresses below). 3) To take steps along the lines of the YSA letter to involve the broadest possible layer of Blacks and other oppressed nationalities in NSCAR and local citywide May 17 coalitions. In Boston, NSCAR plans to move its headquarters into the Black community and is working to establish close collaboration with broader forces in the Black community, especially the NAACP, in the work of building the march.

Comradely,

Barry Sheppard

Barry Sheppard
SWP National Office

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