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January 26, 1977

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To: Political Committee SWP, Attn: Jack Barnes

Dear Comrades,


Attached to this letter you will find a copy of a report on the NC plenum which I am sending to a number of supporters of the IMT. I am forwarding this copy to you as courtesy as my discussion with Jack at the plenum indicated would be appropriate.

I suggest that you may want to publish the report in the IIB as part of the on-going literary discussion in the party and in connection with the plenum reports currently being given in the branches of the party. I believe that the paragraphs between the dotted line on page 14 and the dotted line on page 17 are too technical and cursory to be of interest to the whole party. I would therefore ask that you not include those paragraphs in the report if you publish it. If you need a title, please use : "Report to IMT Supporters in the SWP - January 77".

Please do not publish the present letter along with the report.

Comradely,

John Barzman



John Barzman  
Los Angeles

January 26, 1977

Dear Comrades,

The party National Committee held a plenum in New York, January 6 to 9, 1977. This is a report on those points of the discussion which are of relevance to the purpose of our tendency. They include:

1. The Key Issues in Dispute in the Debate on Indochina
2. The New Angles of the Debate on European Perspectives
3. The Political and Organizational Implications of the Self-Criticism of the IMT on the Ninth World Congress (9th W.C.) on Latin America
4. The Rights and Responsibilities of a Tendency in the SWP

#### 1. The Key Issues in the Debate on the Indochinese Revolution

##### Fred Feldman's Position

Cde Fred Feldman reported for the position of the SWP Political Committee. To my knowledge, this position has never been adopted by the LTF Steering Committee or any other body of the LTF. For Fred, the VCP was and remains a counter-revolutionary Stalinist party. Despite its repeated attempts to collaborate with imperialism, it unwillingly fell into power as a result of the collapse of Thieu which was basically caused by the inability of the U.S. to re-intervene with troops, which itself was basically caused by the American anti-war movement. The new regime in the South is described as a workers and farmers government based on a bourgeois state and progressively instituting socialist relations of production. Fred believed that the qualitative transformation toward a workers state had yet to take place. In the already existing workers state of North Vietnam, the hardened bureaucracy must be overthrown by political revolution.

Fred criticized the draft resolution submitted by Cdes Aubin, Duret, Roman, and Walter (ADRW) for : 1) revising the theory of the workers and farmers government hitherto upheld by the F.I.; 2) adapting to and prettifying the Stalinist VCP; 3) giving validity to the strategy of people's war based in the countryside; and 5) downgrading the political level of the U.S. anti-war movement.

##### Alan Jones' Report

Cde Jones spoke in support of the ADRW resolution. He defined what he considered to be the three key points at issue in the debate on Indochina: He said that there were different answers and different combinations of answers on each of these questions by comrades supporting the IMT. The same is probably true of the other tendencies and factions in the F.I.

- 1) Most importantly, the analysis of the process by which a workers state is established and the economy transformed.
- 2) The character of the VCP, Stalinist or not?
- 3) Whether political revolution is needed to instaure council democracy?

1) Jones charged that Jo Hansen's position revised Trotsky's position and accepted Pablo's erroneous writings on the workers and farmers government. The theory currently held by the SWP leadership can lead one to say that the petty-bourgeoisie is capable of accomplishing the proletarian revolution without the proletariat; that after the destruction of the old bourgeois state, a new bourgeois state is created which then self-destructs and peacefully becomes a workers state. The theory confuses government and state, and blurs the Marxist conception of the state which holds that in the last analysis the state is composed of the armed forces of repression which decide the outcome of class conflicts. It dismembers the Marxist conception of the role of violence in history by creating two different stages of revolution: the first in which the bourgeoisie violently resists the formation of a new bourgeois state, even though this new state may never expropriate it, and the second in which a workers state is more or less peacefully installed. It gives undue weight to the concept of governmental power as opposed to that of dual power. It negates the Marxist conception that socialist relations of production can only come to dominate a particular economy -- this occurs when the means of production cease to circulate as commodities although private property may survive in other fields -- as a result of the conscious action of the proletariat organized as a ruling class, i.e. of a workers state. The workers state issuing from the workers movement carries in embryo within itself a reorganization of the relations of production. The actual emergence of these relations only testifies after the fact that the state which brought them into being was indeed a workers state.

For Jones, Algeria between 1962 and 1965 was fundamentally a different phenomenon than Cuba between 1959 and 1961. In the former case, between 1962 and 1965, the half-hearted workers and farmers government of Ben Bella existed side by side with a bourgeois state. When the time was ripe, the bourgeois state simply eliminated the bothersome government -- through the Boumedienne army coup of 1965. In the Cuban case, Castro's workers and farmers government existed within the framework of a workers state. When the Cuban and imperialist bourgeoisie felt the time had come to put an end to infringements on its property, it had no bourgeois state to turn to in Cuba and its response had to be from the outside. In both cases the decisive element was: which class held state power?

The ability of a workers and farmers government to introduce socialist relations of production without being faced by a centralized domestic armed resistance of the bourgeoisie depends on the class nature of the state under which the government is governing. If the state is a workers state, it can be a tool for carrying out this transformation. If it is a bourgeois state, it will violently oppose it. I might add that conversely, had the Ben Bella and Castro governments not attempted any socialist measures but

instead sought to foster capitalism -- in which case the label of workers and farmers government would not have applied -- the conflict of the government with the state would have been considerably reduced in the case of Algeria, while in the case of Cuba it would have moved toward an open clash. The Cuban bourgeoisie would have had to reconstitute a repressive force with the help of the government and begin to limit the prerogatives, weaken and eventually smash any resistance by the people in arms which constituted the core of the Cuban state.

2) Jones posited that Stalinism and bureaucratic centrism were not mutually exclusive formulas. In an article on the ILP in 1935, that is two years after Trotsky had characterized the Soviet CP and the Third International as definitively Stalinized, and the Soviet bureaucracy as a hardened self-conscious caste, he still used the term bureaucratic centrist to describe them. Jones then listed some characteristics which were not the distinctive feature for classifying a party as Stalinist: violence against opponents, bureaucratized internal regimes, inability to make a revolution anywhere, self-description as pro-Moscow or pro-Stalin by the leadership, etc. The only scientific criterion is the link to real social forces in struggle, in this case whether or not the party is tied to the crystallized bureaucracy of a workers state. The VCP had broken with Moscow in 1945, and however authoritarian its structure was, it had mobilized the masses for revolution despite the peaceful coexistence line of Peking and Moscow.

3) Jones did not expand on the resolution on the question of political revolution

In the discussion period, Cde Breitman warned against a form of dogmatism that would say "Stalinists are incapable of making revolutions; if they come to power, they are not Stalinists". Unfortunately Cde Kerry was not present to elaborate his views. Cde Wohlforth said Jones' position was "nothing but the old Vern-Ryan and Marcey position". Cde Derrick Morrison was mainly concerned about the implications that recognizing the state established in South Vietnam on April 30, 1975, as a workers state, would have on our attitude toward the VCP. He said that until the VCP actually carried out the economic transformation, we should remain distrustful. Unlike the Bolsheviks', the VCP's program was class-collaborationist and we could not give the VCP a blank check. He thought Feldman's position accommodated his concern for program better than others. Cde Sheppard attacked the IMG's approach to the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign in Britain.

#### Critical Support of ADRW Resolution

I intervened in the discussion to present a position of critical support of the ADRW resolution. The resolution is correct on the key issue: recognizing the working class nature of the state which emerged in South Vietnam from the smashing of the Saigon regime, and using the correct method to arrive at this conclusion. I felt the resolution dodged the real issues on the characterization of the VCP because it did not go into the differences over the definition of Stalinism. In my view, the VCP was still acting in what it believed

to be the Soviet bureaucracy's best interests in the unforeseen circumstances which evolved in Vietnam in 1945. The formation of the DRV at that time, and its subsequent long struggle against the French and US invaders, led to the creation of an independent power base for the VCP: the institutions of the DRV. Unlike those of North Korea, which were heavily dependent on the Soviet and Chinese Red Army, the institutions of the DRV grew out of a popular insurrection. For them to be secure against internal challenges, domestic rivals, and foreign aggression, they had to be extended over the whole country. This explains the break with Moscow between 1959 and 1963. The VCP set out to win the war and take power, not to share power or coexist with the Saigon regime, and it used many correct tactics in this struggle.

However, in doing so it was still basically responding to the interests of the bureaucracy of the Vietnamese workers state. The label of Stalinist would fit if one analyzed the DRV bureaucracy as a hardened, self-conscious caste. Such an analysis requires a concrete assessment both of the social and material privileges of the bureaucracy and of the history of differences inside the VCP. Unfortunately this work -- comparable to Trotsky's analysis of Soviet society in *Revolution Betrayed* -- has not yet been satisfactorily conducted. The same lack of data obscures a clear-out use of the term political revolution to characterize the process of instauration of workers democracy which is described in the ADRW resolution. Nonetheless it is already clear that the VCP is intimately intertwined with the DRV state apparatus, that its membership lacks a large base of independently-active workers and youth, and that its program lacks the necessary safeguards against bureaucratic rule. This precludes the VCP from leading the process of democratization. For that, an alternative leadership is needed.

The position I presented was already developed more fully in the document "Vietnam and the Proletarian Revolution" ( see YSA DB Vol. XVII, no 9, December 1973) which comrades may turn to, and in the discussions on drafts of documents to be submitted to the party which were held in the Internationalist Tendency. Hopefully a forthcoming contribution will review these arguments for the party as a whole.

#### Related questions

A few other questions deserve comment. The ADRW does not uncritically extoll the strategy of the VCP. But it does point to certain lessons of the struggle which are useful for all revolutionaries. The VCP did not triumph through a strategy of people's war based in the countryside. Contrary to the Argentine PRT's schema, which saw a gradual build-up of a people's army before dual power and civil war, the lesson of Vietnam is that the strength of the Viet Minh and NLF arose from their origin in a massive, urban-based insurrection organized in popular committees: the August Revolution of 1945. This insurrection followed 15 years of patient mass work in the unions, the countryside, and the national movements by the VCP.

The SWP leadership consistently misrepresents the various attempts to apply the approach of the IMT to the tactics of the American anti-war movement. Such an approach first of all distinguishes between the situation in countries which were directly involved in the war and those which were not. In the first, the effects of the draft, military expenditures, casualties, daily exposure to atrocities, the attempts to whip up patriotism put the question of the war in the center of the national political scene and provided an immediate material basis for a mass movement. The IMT approach would make a second tactical distinction between different countries on the basis of the respective influence of Social-Democratic, Stalinist -- in theory sister parties of the VCP -- and other currents among the masses and among the vanguard.

In the U.S., it was correct to organize a united-front type coalition (National Mobe, NPAC, etc) on the basis of the demand for immediate withdrawal and related points. It was correct to fight to preserve the limited character of these coalitions against attempts to impose reformist platforms or higher demands. But the sustenance of the anti-war movement during elections and during periods of imperialist-Stalinist maneuvers required that as broad as possible a backbone of the movement be organized on an expressly anti-imperialist basis. This objective need of the Vietnamese revolution coincided with an objective need of the American revolution, namely the raising of the level of consciousness of the most determined fighters emerging from the mass struggle. Both these tasks called for the organization of a broad consciously anti-imperialist wing of the anti-war movement on the basis of "Victory to the NLF".

Finally a number of issues related to the analysis of the social overturn have come to the fore. The characterization of the VCP as a non-working-class party, a peasant party, flies in the face of its proletarian implantation (organizer of the Vietnamese trade union movement), of its organic connection to the Comintern, and of its role in the class struggle. If the VCP is a peasant party, why did Feldman describe the NLF as a popular front? Where were the workers parties? (I leave aside the question of where was the bourgeoisie?) How did this popular front become a workers and farmers government? Is it not more accurate to recognize the VCP as a working class organization and the other parties of the NLF as merely front groups of the VCP for work among middle layers? If the link to Moscow is the basis for calling the VCP petty-bourgeois, then does this also apply to such parties as the French CP? If the VCP's peasant base and nationalist character is the basis for calling it petty-bourgeois, does this also apply to the Cuban July 26 movement? Furthermore the definition of Stalinism as petty-bourgeois in class nature raises the question of the class nature of the caste whose interests it articulates. Can the relation of the Soviet bureaucracy as a whole to the means of production be characterized as petty-bourgeois?

While these questions are fundamental and may at some point become burning issues, at present it is important to 1) clarify differences and separate out semantical problems from real differences, and 2) conduct the discussion in as educational a fashion as possible, avoiding factional alignments and unwarranted extrapolations of the other side's views.

## 2. The New Angles of the Debate on European Perspectives

### Gus Horowitz

Cde Horowitz stated that some LTF comrades were in the process of drafting a resolution on Europe. He assessed where the Draft Theses on the Tactics of the P.I. in Capitalist Europe, submitted by Aubin et al., had improved on the European Perspectives Document (EPD) adopted at the Xth W.C., and where it further codified errors. Rather than a common strategy and set of tactics for all of Europe and based on an impending showdown, a programmatic approach bringing in other, non-European, advanced capitalist countries, would have been more useful.

Gus repeated the false accusation that the IMT advocates, as a method, to orient to the concerns of the vanguard rather than to the objective needs of the masses. In fact both the IMT and the LTF advocate beginning with the objective needs of the masses. They diverge in that the LTF then dismisses the concerns of the vanguard as a factor to be taken into account in elaborating tactics, whereas the IMT seeks to utilize situations where the concerns of the vanguard coincide with the needs of the masses. In reality the LTF has a tendency to adapt to the concerns of the masses, i.e. their current level of consciousness. Horowitz also said the IMT gave more weight to militant forms of struggle than to political clarity.

He claimed that the European sections, except for Spain, had reached a plateau in their growth. Since the situation had continued to be favorable, this had to be attributed to an erroneous line. He noted improvement in women's liberation work and trade union work, but claimed there had been missed opportunities in work among youth, immigrant workers, around democratic demands and in elections and "general propaganda". The four basic errors of the Aubin et al. document were:

- the new mass vanguard is seen as present in all of Europe. It actually refers to the centrists. They are treated not as opponents but as objects of collaboration.
- it sees the CPs as somehow superior to the SPs
- it fails to recognize the formula "For an SP-CP government" as valid everywhere, and is weak on popular frontism (Otelco, French Union of the Left, joint slate with the Italian D.P.)
- the slogan of building soviets is given undue weight and, even where correct, it is linked to strictly organizational proposals (extend, centralize, etc) and not to the central political tasks, in particular the governmental slogan.

### Alan Jones

Jones felt that the new discussion on Europe was a breath of fresh air. Horowitz had adopted a responsible tone in his criticisms. Fortunately, the LTF line was now illustrated by some concrete examples: the Portuguese PRT, the Spanish LC, the proposals of the LTF tendencies in the IMG, and elsewhere.

Jones attacked the LTF's support for the Portuguese Socialist Party's counter-revolutionary demonstrations of the summer 1975.

Since that disastrous mistake, the LTF had split, lost the bulk of its forces in Portugal and been unable to make the slightest gains there. He said the Spanish LC's characterization of the massive workers commissions as fake workers organizations tied to the fascists was sectarian. The LC then proceeds to characterize the small UGT union as the only genuine trade union organization, a totally undeserved concession to social-democracy. In addition, the LC has been slow and workerist in taking up women's liberation work.

In Britain Jones claimed that the LTF's policy of opposing any splits from the Labour Party has led it on more and more occasions to support the Labour Right against the Labour Left and the far left. Thus it opposes work in the mass-based Scottish Labour Party and decries any position of critical support to far-left candidates standing against right-wing candidates of the Labour Party. Similarly, in Italy, the LTF line ended up calling for critical support for the openly class-collaborationist CP rather than the vacillating centrist slate of Democrazia Proletaria.

He denied that there were big differences between the IMT and the LTF in the analysis of the CPs and their difference from the SPs. The Aubin et al. document shows the IMT does not underestimate the influx of workers into, and the crisis of, the traditional workers organizations. But it recognizes that this influx takes place under different conditions than it did in 36 or 45. In the Italian CP, debates have broken out over the austerity measures supported by the CP deputies; in the French, over the abandonment of the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat from the CP program; in the British over the Plyusch affair. Left-wing developments in social-democracy are also appreciated: the CERES and Rocard groups in the French SP, the LPYS and Tony Benn wing of Labour in Britain etc. He said the differences on the popular front were mainly semantical.

The bulk of his talk went over some well-known points about the situation in Europe. For the debates on Portugal and on governmental formulas, comrades can consult my report on the February 1976 IEC (See SWP IIB no 6 in 1976, April) and the Aubin et al. resolution which is rather explicit.

### Remarks on the Origins of the Differences

It is difficult to assess the debate on Europe at this time. Clearly a whole slew of red herrings have been eliminated: extension of guerilla warfare to Europe, extrapolation of American tactics onto European situations, accusations of backwardness on the women's and national questions.

But the debate in the SWP still suffers from a lack of rounded information. If we are to evaluate the tactical options of each section in this or that area of work as a test of the contending lines, then both sides of the argument must be documented. So far, the articles in Intercontinental Press have been either 1) designed to bolster LTF arguments by shedding light on areas of the class struggle which the LTF accuses the IMT of under-estimating (student, national minorities, immigrants, abortion, growth of social-democracy),



or 2) written by LTF supporters and lacking a sharp defense of the line of the sections. As a result it has been difficult to figure out the overall orientation of the sections or their precise line on each of the above-mentioned area of work. For example the extensive work of our French comrades in publishing a daily newspaper or in the fight for trade union unity and democracy has barely been mentioned. We need reprints of the main line-resolutions and editorials of the sections, and interviews with section leaderships designed to explain their line to comrades of other sections. Inprecator for reasons of space and limited resources has so far not filled this gap. This is another argument for pooling all the F.I.'s publications and resources under a single leadership that will avoid duplications of some articles and omission of others. Public tours by spokespeople for our European and other sections would also help.

More precise and objective knowledge of the political interventions of the sections will enable us to unravel several different elements of the debate.

1. a set of differences which form a pattern at the core of the debate. These are: a) the LTF does not recognize the existence of a broad vanguard beyond the revolutionary organization's periphery and yet above the level of consciousness of the broad masses. It seeks to divide this layer into; 1) opponents, 2) contacts, and 3) newly radicalizing elements of the masses concerned almost exclusively with the immediate demands around which they have entered into struggle. b) This leads the LTF to counterpose very rigidly the stage in which immediate and democratic demands are used and the stage in which transitional demands can be advanced. c) Similarly the LTF makes a rigid separation between the stage when the traditional organizations still control the masses and the stage in which the masses have broken with them. This leads to both tail-endism toward the SPs and CPs, and ultimatic demands on the broad vanguard. Thus in Portugal the LTF's governmental formula excluded forces to the left of the SP and CP and confined the struggle to a struggle for democratic demands and a Constituent Assembly. At the same time it refused to recognize any potential for the workers commissions to become soviets until they adopted the Trotskyist position on the government formula.

2. other differences on tactics for Europe which stem not from the essence of the IMT-LTF debate described above but from other debates. For example, differences over the analysis of the crisis and disintegration of world Stalinism colour the evaluation of the European CPs. Differences over the importance that must be given to control over the means of formation of public opinion ( mainly the media, but ultimately the whole ideological superstructure ) in any discussion of the relation of bourgeois democracy to workers democracy coloured the evaluation of the Republica affair. Differences over how to fight fascist groups when they are still small grouplets coloured the evaluation of the June 21 action against Ordre Nouveau. The same applies to differences over the definition of popular fronts, over whether police strikes are supportable, etc...

3. Finally there are situations in which the new mass vanguard does not exist in any tangible form -- like the USA today -- or is not directly relevant (for programmatic statements and in some interventions). Disagreements may nonetheless arise because of different evaluations of the relationship between contending political forces or other variables.

A number of consequences flow from these considerations--The IMT and LTF tend to be homogeneous on the core set of differences and more diversified on the other points--It is important to recognize that broad areas of agreement exist on basic programmatic points and even on many specific interventions. This is the approach which is presently being followed by the European women's commission of the F.I. in its attempt to draft general Theses on women's liberation work in Europe--The channels through which the international debate should be conducted must not stifle expression of diversity. It is clear that an internal situation like that of the 10th W.C., i.e. the counterposition of the IMT and LTF with the pretense of nearly unanimous tendency and faction positions on almost every issue under the sun, including those not on the agenda, is counter-productive. We shall return to this point later.

### 3. Political and Organizational Implications of the IMT Self-Criticism On the 9th W.C. Resolution on Latin America

#### Jack Barnes

Cde Barnes reported on how he viewed the self-critical statement. He said he agreed with almost all the points in the statement. They confirmed the correctness of the LTF's criticisms of the 9th W.C. resolution. The statement was a historic and progressive step forward. It should be fully assimilated through a re-opening of the whole discussion and a review of the LTF's arguments, in particular of Jo Hansen's articles which constitute some of the finest educational writings of our movement. The correction should be endorsed by the F.I. as a whole in the form of rescinding the 9th and 10th W.C. resolutions on Latin America. The errors on Latin America stemmed from a method which is still being applied in Europe, although even there its most deleterious effects have already been corrected.

Barnes further contended that the 9th W.C. had consolidated a departure from fundamental tenets of the Trotskyist program. This was the objective cause for the splits, the tensions, the rival international centers. Now the principled matter was resolved, the process could be reversed, and the remaining differences could be handled in a fraternal fashion. Barnes promised that the fusion of the LCR-ETA VI and LC could be consummated in Spain within a year. He proposed that both factions, the IMT and LTF, dissolve.

#### Alan Jones

Jones said he was unprepared for the type of report given by Barnes. (In my opinion Barnes' organizational proposals required time for careful consideration and should have been communicated beforehand if a response was expected). Alan focused his remarks on the self-critical statement itself. The IMT would stand by certain key

political acquisitions of the 9th W.C., basically the attempt to apply the concept of the new mass vanguard to the Latin American class struggle following the victory of the Cuban revolution, and the analysis of class relations and political formations in Latin America.

The 9th W.C. had been right in pointing to a new partnership between the imperialist centers and Latin American bourgeoisies. This narrowed the ability of the bourgeois parties to co-opt mass movements, undermined the already narrow margin of bourgeois democracy, thrust the army into the center of politics, and faced any rise of the mass movement with the inevitability of short-term armed confrontations before it could fully develop into an insurrectionary situation. Military preparation of the proletariat and its allies for these partial confrontations was an objective need of the masses. One could not explain the growth of the PRT and Castroists unless one recognized that they had tried to provide an answer, however incorrect, to this felt need of the class struggle. While the 9th W.C. had tried to give a Trotskyist answer to this problem of the class struggle, the LTF had denied the need to answer. Finally attempts to form united fronts and even to effect fusions with left-moving centrist formations such as the PRT had been correct.

The errors stemmed from an incorrect application of this generally correct approach. Armed struggle should not have been defined as mainly or only guerilla warfare, whether urban or rural; it should have been understood as arming the masses with the desire to arm themselves. In this facet of the class struggle as in others, the revolutionary organization had a leading role to play, and beyond a certain size, could take initiatives through a fraction dedicated to that area of work. It was incorrect to define this assertion as a strategy of armed struggle. More appropriately it meant that armed forms of the mass struggle would be a component of any strategy for advancing the class struggle and building the revolutionary party. The turn of the Cuban CP away from guerilla warfare had indeed been a turn away from internationalism and not a correction of its line. Finally, the 9th W.C. had not armed the F.I. for a hard political fight with the centrist and militarist conceptions of groups like the PRT.

Jones welcomed the pledge by Barnes that the debate inside the F.I. would now be de-escalated.

#### How the Self-Criticism Came About

In my opinion there was very little in the document that had not already been said at the time of the 10th W.C. While the final resolutions on Argentina and Bolivia contained many residual errors carried over from the 9th W.C., many amendments had been made and overall the general line was corrected by the resolution on armed struggle ( see Documents, World Congress of the Fourth International, Intercontinental Press, December 23, 1974, and Report on the Tenth World Congress by Bill Massey and John Barzman, IIB no 4, April 1974). Many articles by comrades of the IMT had already criticized the errors of the 9th W.C. The draft of the present self-criticism has been in preparation

for a long time. I reported that it was nearly completed in my report on the February 1976 IEC (see "An Evaluation of the February 1976 Plenum of the IEC" by John Barzman, IIB #6, April 1976). At the time Cde Jo Hansen mocked the idea that the self-criticism would be substantial. The IMT statement codifies a series of corrections for all to see and eliminates the basis for false polemics.

I took the opportunity of the plenum discussion to add the IT's own self-criticism to that of the IMT. At the time of the last pre-world congress discussion supporters of the IMT in the SWP already disagreed with the errors of the 9th W.C. on Latin America. They did agree with the line of the document "In Defense of Leninism, In Defense of the Fourth International" by Cde Mandel. Their disagreements were expressed in several written contributions as well as some oral interventions. However, one grouping of IMT supporters, the Internationalist Tendency, chose to de-emphasize its criticisms. The I.T. correctly trusted the ability of the leadership of the F.I. to continue the rectification process already under way at that time. However most comrades of the IT were overly cautious in putting forward criticisms based on their own experience and Marxist training and deferred to the leadership of the IMT. The attitude of the June 10th Tendency of IMT supporters, which consistently expressed its criticisms, was far more correct.

On the other hand the IMT is sometimes falsely accused of having put its supporters under discipline to vote for resolutions they disagreed with, thereby altering the outcome of the voting. Comrades were asked by the IMT caucus to assess their position on the basis of the general line of the resolutions which together constituted the platform of the IMT. The IMT could not be held responsible for comrades who later on alleged that they had disagreed with these resolutions altogether at the time of the voting. This is merely one among many incidents that testify to destructive effects of the rampant factionalism of that period. (I have explained in detail why the IT was not an unprincipled bloc in the article "The Factional Strategy of Party-Building", SWP DB Vol 34, no 8, July 1976, p12-3).

The self-criticism of the IMT demonstrates the ability of the leadership of the F.I. to correct errors in the light of subsequent developments of the class struggle and internal debate. It is a stinging rebuttal to those who refused to show patience in the debate. The codification of this rectification should have come earlier. In my opinion the hard divisions of the FI along factional lines slowed down the process. In particular the LTF's claim, until very recently, that the differences over Latin America were of a principled programmatic nature which justified splits in many sections, and its refusal to recognize that a rectification had already taken place in the practice of the FI in Latin America, was a source of unnecessary friction. The new evaluation of the differences by the LTF should help to cut down on the frantic searches for the original sin (shortcuts, adaptation to alien class forces, Pabloism) and redirect the discussion onto the real issues.

What is needed now is a document on revolutionary perspectives in Latin America in the new period opened by the defeats in Chile and Argentina. The FI has new forces in Mexico, Central America, and

the Northern part of South America. It has groups which have been functioning under the military dictatorships of the Southern Cone and Brazil. Their experiences must be synthesized. Perhaps the most pressing task is the unification of the organizations which support the IMT, the LTF, and the BT, and the pooling of their Spanish language publications.

### What Caused the Division of the FI and How to Heal It

In my remarks at the plenum I pointed out that the differences over the 9th W.C. errors on Latin America alone could not explain the factional tensions and splits. The split in our Argentine section in 1968 was justified by the alleged incompatibility within the same organization of the two opposing lines. When the LTF was formed, the SWP leadership simply approved the extension of this line of argumentation to Peru, Venezuela, all of Latin America and Mexico, without bothering to show that the differences were incompatible in those countries also. Then the Spanish organization was split, a new organization set up in Portugal outside the recognized sympathizing group. LTF-dominated sections stopped contributing to the F.I.

The new element that was causing the splits was not the depth of the differences per se but the conception that wherever differences arose, it was better to test the two lines in practice than to submit to majority decisions and argue the differences out through a democratic debate. How this conception got the upper hand in the LTF remains to be explained. But it was and remains the main source of tensions.

It was in that context that a group of Australian IMT supporters openly split from the FI group there. This was the only case of such an action on the part of IMT supporters. In Canada the split was due to the refusal of the section to recruit two groups of Trotskyist militants because they supported the IMT. In the US, IMT supporters in the SWP were expelled for defending the line of the International. It is necessary to bring up these unpleasant facts so as to avoid creating the illusion that the simple self-criticism of the IMT will resolve all problems.

To return to a fraternal debate within the framework of a united and disciplined International, it will be necessary for the LTF to dismantle its international factional apparatus and abide by the statutes of the FI. It must accept to function as a minority loyally fulfilling its responsibilities to help carry out the majority line. It must argue for its political views through the proper internal channels of the F.I., and in public only when the International leadership has so decided.

Individual comrades and sections who contribute unconditionally to the building of the International and subordinate all their international work to the decisions of the democratically elected bodies of the F.I., regardless of whether they agree with its projects or not, can only feel abused if others claim the same membership rights

while disclaiming most of the obligations that are the basis of these rights. They tend to listen with less attention to the views of those who give no indication that they will submit to the outcome of the discussion in a disciplined fashion. While availability of documents is an indispensable precondition, the free flow of ideas is not merely a function of reprinting documents. Comrades of the LTF will find that their views will be given a thousand times better reception if it is made clear that the LTF is determined to fulfill its responsibilities where it is a minority and to guarantee minority rights where it is a majority.

As for the IMT, it is not a faction. IMT supporters who vote differently from other IMT supporters are not breaking any alleged factional discipline. Nor are comrades who report the discussion of IMT caucuses forgetting to observe "the security rule of the secret faction". I am attaching my letter to the PC on this matter as an appendix. The IMT is an international leadership tendency; its members are known. They are not bound by discipline but simply committed to consult each other prior to taking initiatives on political questions related to the platform of the tendency. On some occasions, the IMT has been forced to act as a caucus on issues which were not part of its platform, for example the question of how to respond to the illegal expulsion of the IT from the SWP. These instances were unfortunate. However they came about only as a result of the clear refusal by elements of the LTF to abide by the International's norms of democratic centralism, and the failure of any other elements of the LTF to disassociate from these breaches of our norms. There is no reason to believe that the IMT will again be placed in such a situation. Thus Cde Barnes' proposal to de-escalate tensions and institutionalize collaboration can easily be initiated by a dissolution of the LTF.

The differences over perspectives in Europe and various aspects of the world political resolution warrant the maintenance of the IMT and LTF as tendencies.

#### New Openness in the International Debate

IMT supporters who were present at the NC plenum were invited to observe the first two points of the LTF faction meeting which followed the plenum. Horowitz reported on the OCRFI conference which had been attended by a delegation from the United Secretariat. Although a discussion between the FI and OCRFI in preparation for fusion was felt to be out of order by the USec, it was agreed to hold a regular public debate. Horowitz seemed satisfied with the progress of the exchanges. Cde Sheppard then gave a commentary on the platform of the Bolshevik Tendency. He described it as confined to analysis of texts, as exaggerated in its criticisms of the IMT, and gross in its criticisms of the SWP. All of this is true. Nonetheless it would have been useful to have a representative of the BT present at the plenum.

A number of signs indicate that the coming pre-world congress discussion will be substantially more fruitful than the last. The LTF has split right down the middle over the major new developments of the class struggle: Portugal and Angola. The IMT has eliminated the basis for

a whole series of false polemics by its self-criticism. There are differences and rectifications inside LTF groups. For example, in Canada the LSA/LSO has moved close to the RMG and the GMR on the question of recognizing the social-democratic nature of the NDP and on the question of calling for an Independent Socialist Quebec. In the US, the SWP has taken a turn to the working class. This is not only a matter of adding a new area of work but has led to some political changes. For example the class struggle left wing of the women's movement is no longer defined simply on the basis of consistent advocacy of mass action, but also on the basis of class composition and demands. In Britain there were differences inside the LTF on Angola. In Spain and Mexico, there were differences inside the LTF on the importance of unification with the IMT. Different emphases have appeared among IMT supporters. The move toward rapid unification of split sections in Canada, Mexico, Spain, Australia, and wherever else forces supporting the FI exist (Portugal, Colombia, Peru, etc) , accompanied by the pooling of resources for common projects decided by the International, should alleviate organizational obstacles to a full discussion.

It is now possible to de-factionalize alignments on most of the issues in debate. Comrades in organizations dominated by the LTF, the IMT, or the BT, no longer have to feel that elementary party patriotism dictates alignment with the faction or tendency which is leading their organization.

The discussion has shown that at the present time, there is no self-evident logical connection between the line of a tendency on Europe and positions on other issues in debate, such as the nature of the VCP, the women's liberation movement, military support of the MPLA, or the Mexican elections. Comrades who have tried to apply the IMT methodology to elaborate a line for the United States have come up with a variety of different proposals. Similarly LTF supporters in Canada and Britain have at times supported different lines on how to intervene in the class struggle in their country. While logical connections probably will appear at some later stage of the discussion, it is clear that any attempt to freeze all comrades who support one tendency into the same set of positions on all issues in debate can only lead to gross oversimplifications and reduce the ability of the FI to arrive at higher syntheses and correct conclusions.

The opposite approach should be taken. Tendencies should avoid extending their platform until clear logical connections have been demonstrated. To insure this caution, rank and file comrades should reject a-priori acceptance of new positions of their tendency or faction. For example, if the Steering Committee of the LTF adopts a position on Angola, comrades who supported the LTF in the past because of its line on Latin America or on Europe should feel no obligation to support this new position. I understand that the LTF in France has chosen to define itself as a faction based solely on the issues that have already been discussed in the international debate. It has no faction position on the issues that have arisen in the French section's discussion of political perspectives and its members are free to support any tendency active in that discussion. In general comrades should try to look at the debate with a new objectivity, avoid prejudging the outcome of a discussion, seek answers to all their doubts and questions, voice all their criticisms,

and this not inside their tendency or faction but in the party as a whole where others probably share the same questions.

This approach has begun to be implemented on an international level. The new draft resolutions have not been submitted in the name of tendencies and factions but under the name of individual comrades. At the SWP NC plenum, it was decided not to take a vote on the reports on Vietnam, Europe, and Latin America, so as to avoid freezing comrades into hard positions before the debate is under way.

#### 4. Rights and Responsibilities of a Tendency in the SWP

In the SWP, our caucus of IMT supporters decided last summer to define itself strictly as a tendency based on the platform of the IMT in the international debate ( see letter from John Barzman to IMT supporters dated August 19, 1976). IMT supporters were encouraged to participate in and contribute to the discussion on orientation for the USA, but as individual members of the party. The discussion in the party as a whole will show whether there is at the present time a correspondence between a particular set of positions on the United States and support for the IMT's political platform.

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At the plenum a meeting was held between Cde Jack Barnes, Cdes Alan Jones and Joanna Misnick, the organizers of selected branches in Houston, Chicago, L.A., and N.Y., and myself, to go over the norms of functioning of a tendency in the SWP. Comrades will remember that such a discussion was requested last summer by our caucus but was postponed. Cde Barnes agreed that he would write a letter reiterating the points discussed at the meeting sometime in February.

Barnes opened by stating that the set of IMT supporters in the SWP had been functioning fine and were well integrated into party life as the presence of several of them on branch executive committees testified. Nothing from the past should be held against these comrades. It should not be assumed that these comrades would have a particular political position on issues currently under discussion in the party. Their contributions should be welcomed on all questions.

Barnes then said that he did not consider the IMT supporters in the SWP to be a formal tendency. He said a formal tendency was a grouping of comrades organized to get a particular resolution adopted in a well-defined discussion. Nevertheless the set of IMT supporters was entitled to rights of a tendency character. They had the right to meet, to correspond, and to circulate drafts of documents to be submitted to the party. In response to a question about the elections to the Chicago L.E.C., he stated that it was a good idea to have different currents of thought which existed in the local represented on the L.E.C., even if their difference had little demonstrable relevance to the L.E.C.'s business. This is of course in addition to representation of the tendency on the NC. As an afterthought I might add that since L.E.C.s will play a major role in organizing the international discussion it would be useful to have IMT representation on them.



The obligations of tendency supporters are those expected of all members of the party plus the following. The platform of the IMT in the international discussion is the basis of tendency status therefore the tendency should avoid letting discussion at caucus meetings shift onto subjects not included in the stated platform, for example onto a discussion of the SWP's orientation in the US. As a courtesy, the tendency should inform the proper leading bodies of the party of its meetings. Also as a courtesy, drafts of documents and important pieces of correspondence of a political nature should be forwarded to the party leadership. The party does not recognize the right to private correspondence; every political act whether written or spoken is subject to review by the party as a whole.

This statement goes a long way toward clarifying the leadership's present interpretation of tendency rights and responsibilities, an interpretation which has the force of law. Comrades may disagree with these rules and seek to amend or replace them through the proper channels. Until then, all must abide by them.

The meeting also discussed the outstanding unresolved organizational hangovers from the previous period (non-reintegrated applicants, attitude toward comrades who no longer have a standing application, bad feelings in the Madison YSA) and it seemed that a real effort would be made to eliminate the sources of friction.

One problem remains to be clarified: how to review the international discussion to this time. Many aspects of the current differences are not intelligible without an understanding of the debates for the last world congress, and possibly before. New members and comrades busy with other matters need to have these debates reviewed. In my opinion it would be disastrous to have this review conducted inside faction and tendency caucuses. On the other hand it would be difficult to condense it into the three months of pre-world congress discussion the party will organize. The best method seems to be to schedule educational-type discussions open to contradictory statements, sometimes organized as debates, every so often (for example monthly) until the actual discussion itself opens.

The SWP will probably hold a convention in Ohio in August. It will probably focus on domestic questions. Another pre-world congress convention will probably be held in the winter 77-78.

Comrades should also be aware that RMOC has split over the need for serious overtures to the SWP based on a serious characterization of the SWP. Thus the attempt by RMOC forces to evade or postpone the political discussion which the IT new faction had insisted was necessary, has proved futile. Reality demanded immediate answers. Several former RMOC comrades are now applying to the SWP in Chicago and New York. This is a new advance for the SWP and the Fourth International.

In Canada and Quebec both the RMG and GMR have taken strong initiatives toward the LSA/LSO, demanding rapid unifications on the basis that there are no principled programmatic disagreements. A unified pan-Canadian section would considerably bolster the influence of the FI at a time when the struggle in Quebec and Canada is on the rise.

The unified section could also demonstrate the viability of an organization with a lively, many-sided and democratic internal regime. It is an experiment that members of the SWP will follow with keen interest.

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The new period in the international debate which is now opening offers supporters of the IMT and all comrades who are concerned with Leninist party democracy a unique opportunity to demonstrate in practice the tremendous advantages for party-building of loyal tendency discussions. By setting an example of active participation in their branches and objectivity and openness in the discussion comrades can establish a precedent for future reference.

Comradely,

John Barzman



cc: Jana P., Lee M., Berta L., Cathy M., Judy R., Celia S., Greg L., Roger H.; SWP-N.O., Jackie, Leon, Peter, Karen, Joanna.

*P.S. : I have only made a few copies of the report because of the cost of duplicating and mailing it. Please pass it around to others who might be interested. Any contribution is of course welcome.*