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Political Committee
Socialist Workers Party
New York, New York

Dear Comrades:

I have received the answer of the Political Committee to my letter of November 5, requesting permission to participate in the pre-World Congress written discussion.

The conclusions reached by the Political Committee are totally unsatisfactory. They literally brim with national chauvinist attitudes; the attitude that what is good for the United States is good for the world, the attitude that Leninist norms which apply to the Fourth International are not binding upon the Socialist Workers Party. These conclusions show complete disrespect for internationalism and the Fourth International, and they contain a number of distortions and falsehoods.

This is highlighted and underlined by the fact that the Political Committee failed to send a copy of their statement to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, in spite of the fact that I sent such a copy of my November 5 letter to the United Secretariat and in spite of the fact that the questions raised directly concern the World Movement. (If such a copy was sent, the failure to indicate that in the P.C. letter to myself was quite incorrect.)

I intend to present this entire correspondence to the United Secretariat and ask them to print it in full in the internal International Information Bulletins; and, to appeal to the United Secretariat to allow representatives of the proletarian minority in the Socialist Workers Party to attend the World Congress as participants.

Let us note what Comrade Cannon had to say on this subject. In The First Ten Years Of American Communism, Cannon speaks of the "Kucher" affair:

What is most significant about this episode in retrospect is the way it illustrates the fairness and democracy prevailing in the movement at that time, the recognition of the right of a small group to maintain a dissident point of view, not only in the Party here but also to have representation at the Comintern debates on the disputed questions. (p. 193)

The Proletarian Orientation is hardly a small group, relative to the size of Socialist Workers Party, but the point is clear. It is also clear that the P.C. of the SWP does not share this stance of "fairness and democracy." We hope and believe that the World Movement, the United Secretariat, will be able to correct this matter and possibly educate the SWP leadership on some of the elements of democratic centralist principles.

The source of the Political Committee's completely erroneous understanding of internationalism should be clear: the petty-bourgeois orientation and political perspective of the leadership, and their lack of interest in the affairs of the world working class, which is only an extension of their neglect of the American proletariat and its struggles. This leadership,

guardians over hundreds of thousands of its membership's dollars, refuses to substantially aid--that is, make sacrifices for--our impoverished and beleaguered comrades around the globe. We could elaborate on this latter subject, but we believe the World Movement is aware of the immense budget and the immense fiscal irresponsibility of the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party. However, I will be happy, if requested, to elaborate at great length on this sad situation.

Now I will turn to the incredible four "reasons" given by the P.C. for its action. I will take them point by point.

[1] In its letter of December 10, the Political Committee stated: "In its platform, the Proletarian Orientation Tendency did not include positions on the key issues in dispute in the world Trotskyist movement. The Proletarian Orientation Tendency platform was confined to differences in current positions and orientation of the Socialist Workers Party. Adherents were recruited on this declared basis regardless of their conflicting views on various international questions."

This statement must be attributed to either ignorance or dishonesty. The Proletarian Orientation Tendency firmly opposed and continues to oppose the International Youth Resolution and made major emphasis of the question of "the Democratic Secular State in Palestine." Our delegates spoke and voted against the P.C. draft resolution on the Mid-East. I myself spoke twice on this latter subject: in my major presentation to the Convention, I clearly stated its decisive importance as proof that the SWP was departing from a proletarian perspective and substituting the "student revolt" for the Transitional Program and the program of Permanent Revolution. Let us add, that the position of the SWP today, as expressed in its press, on the question of Bangla Desh is totally incorrect. Its call for simply self-determination for Bangla Desh is an extension of its non-class position on the Middle East and conflicts sharply with slogans of the World Movement: Down with the Counter-Revolutionary Indo-Pak War!, Forward Towards a United Socialist Bengal! and Forward, Towards the Indian Sub-Continent Revolution!

As a grouping with a proletarian and internationalist point of view, the Proletarian Orientation was precisely concerned with international questions and is deeply interested in the discussions going on in the World Trotskyist Movement. We feel these discussions can help prepare the way for the glorious future of the Fourth International.

But, if the P.C. assertions were true--and they are not--we would assume that they would desire an elaboration of our views for the benefit both of themselves and the International rather than to inhibit such a discussion. Either way, the P.C. is dead wrong.

The references to differences among supporters of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency is cynical. Is the Party Majority and leadership in agreement on all questions? Is this even desirable? We hardly think so. We can mention the simple fact that on the decisive question of the Mid-East, Comrades Langston, Langston and Rothschild, who were members of the Party Majority submitted a counter-resolution. We need not delve into the deep differences in the Majority on questions such as the importance of the trade unions, the revolutionary capacity of the gay liberation movement and other questions. The point is that the Proletarian Orientation has taken positions on international questions, and in accord with Leninist norms, wants to bring them before the International Movement.

[2] In its letter of December 10, the Political Committee stated: "So far as knowledge of the positions of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency and its leaders is concerned, the Political Committee reminds you of the fact that all of the internal bulletins produced during the Socialist Workers Party pre-convention discussion were sent to every group affiliated to or in sympathy with the Fourth International."

This obscures the real situation. For while it is true that the SWP documents may have been received by other sections and sympathizing groups, however, it is quite obvious that many sections because of pressing financial situations, political repression, or simply because of the large quantity of such documents are unable to translate, publish and distribute the internal documents, pre-convention and convention debates of all sections and sympathizing groups. On the other hand, documents for the World Congress are normally given priority for distribution to the entire section.

In passing, let us remind the Political Committee that the same was true for the Majority documents. Will the SWP leadership refrain from similar participation in the World Congress on this basis too? We hardly think so.

One other point is relevant here. Since our views are already known, why not permit an elaboration of them for the World Movement? It would be a positive service to the Fourth International to make widely known that a large number of the members of the SWP disagree with the petty-bourgeois line of the leadership and that there is good hope for the rectification of the present line by the ranks of the American comrades.

[3] In its letter of December 10, the Political Committee stated: "Neither your quote from the July 7, 1971, letter from the Political Committee of Socialist Workers Party to the United Secretariat, printed in International Information Bulletin No. 5, July 1971, nor from the proposed statutes of the Fourth International have any bearing on your request."

Here we are into the heart of the whole matter; here that contempt for the World Movement reaches a crescendo and fully justifies the use of the political designation, "national chauvinism." Let me take this up in some depth.

[A] The original letter from the Political Committee to the United Secretariat stated (as I quoted in my original letter):

"In view of this, it is now our opinion that the leaderships of sections and sympathizing organizations who feel concerned about these developments would do well to begin consulting directly with each other, particularly in considering what relationship these developments may have to the political differences that have arisen, and what is the wisest course to pursue. This should include the leaderships of declared tendencies in national sections, where they may exist, inasmuch as this is a period of discussion preparatory to a world congress." (emphasis added)

The Political Committee says that this does not "have any bearing on your request." No bearing.

The essence comes out. The Socialist Workers Party leadership announces its right to interfere in the affairs of every section in the world: sponsor a minority in the British section, send Comrade Barnes to France to establish a pro-SWP minority in the Ligue Communiste and commission its envoy-at-large, Comrade Camejo, to Latin America behind the back of the United Secretariat and so on. The Socialist Workers Party leadership then demands minority rights for its political sympathizers in other sections (which is perfectly correct), but, when it comes to "sacred American soil," decides that this demand is irrelevant. It has "no bearing." What contemptible cynicism and violation of the principles of democratic centralism. We reject this and urge the World Movement to do the same.

It was not without reason that Comrade Livio Maitan wrote, in International Information Bulletin No. 6, November 1971:

"This is a real problem, as is the problem of future minorities in sections where the majority supports the international minority. Its solution will be relatively easy if everyone respects the statutory norms, if everyone is guided by the necessary sense of responsibility, if everyone has a clear understanding of the vital importance of keeping the International's cadre intact in a period when we have already made unprecedented progress and when enormous possibilities are opening up even in the near future."

What is the attitude of the Political Committee of the SWP toward the "statutory norms" of our world movement? This brings us to the second part of our reply.

[B] Again, I refer to the December 10 letter from the P.C. which stated: "...nor from the proposed statutes of the Fourth International have any bearing on your request." Need we elaborate. The Political Committee of the SWP has no use for statutory norms, let alone the real content of democratic centralism, when it runs counter to its immediate aims and factional frenzy. We reply to you, erstwhile comrades of the Political Committee of the SWP, that the proposed statutes are indeed relevant, that they do indeed "have bearing," and that they shall not be ignored, at least by the proletarian section of the Socialist Workers Party, the Proletarian Orientation Tendency, which is deeply loyal to our World Party and its norms and its opinions.

[4] In its letter of December 10, the Political Committee stated: "Your request to make an 'individual' contribution to the pre-world congress discussion would have the effect of reopening the discussion that was closed by the 24th National Convention of the Socialist Workers Party. Consequently your request is rejected."

The previous three reasons offered by the P.C. were invalid. This fourth is absurd. In no way, would the participation of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency or its leaders in the World Congress discussion


or debates violate the decisions of the 24th National Convention of the Socialist Workers Party. The American minority comrades have in the past, and will in the future, obey the decisions of the Convention in our relations to the political world outside of the Party. Are you suggesting disloyalty on my part or on the part of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency?

What you are saying, in essence, is that the World Movement is an outside organization and that the SWP must conduct its relations to it as we would an opponent, such as Stalinism or Healyism. Betrayed here is an attitude of disloyalty to the International by the Political Committee of the SWP which treats it in a manner which dictates a closing of the ranks by all SWP members.

Above and beyond all of this, is a mistaken understanding of political discussion and debate. It doesn't weaken and debilitate a Bolshevik organization; it strengthens it. That is true of a national section, as well as the International. And that is one of the ABC's of Marxism.

I will here restate my intention to present this matter to the world movement, ask that the entire correspondence be published for the benefit of the World Movement and appeal for participation by minority representatives of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency to the World Congress.

Comradely,



Ralph Levitt (Lewis)

cc: United Secretariat