

May 21, 1974

To the Steering Committee of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is a copy of a letter from Joe Hansen to Ernest Mandel. It is a response to Ernest's letter of April 30 concerning publication of documents and related questions that have come up since the world congress. A copy of Ernest's letter was mailed to you on May 10.

Also enclosed is a copy of a letter from the comrades of the Liga Socialista in Mexico describing the exchange of world congress reports with the comrades of the GCI.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice

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May 21, 1974

Dear Ernest,

To begin with, I'll take up the proposals in your April 8 letter, which you discussed with Comrade Waters, on the counter-report on armed struggle in Latin America.

I still do not see how it is possible to conclude that a "security" question is involved in either the first paragraph, or the last two paragraphs of the counterreport. The argumentation is of a programmatic nature. The specific references clearly concern program.

In the first paragraph, your point seems to be that a reference to areas outside of Latin America entails a "security" question. I think that is invalid. Comrade Roman, whose report you must have approved before he gave it, ranged far beyond Latin America. And in the debate in the preceding years, you yourself took the lead in going beyond Latin America in seeking points of support for your position. How can you now suddenly invoke "security" considerations?

Similarly in the last two paragraphs, the specific references involve in the one instance positions taken publicly by leaders or members of the International Executive Committee Majority. If "security" was violated, it was surely violated in voicing such views publicly. (They were also stated at the congress by delegates who were members of the IECMT.) In the second instance, the specific references are to the logical implications of your position on armed struggle. It is inadmissible to brand one's calling attention to this as a violation of "security."

I therefore disagree on making any changes in these paragraphs that would alter the substance of what I said.

Within that framework, I am willing to consider rephrasing the paragraphs so as to remove any possible misinterpretations. I propose the following.

Change the first paragraph to read:

"To properly judge the resolution that has been placed before the congress, and in particular the arguments made by Comrade Roman, the reporter for the International Executive Committee Majority Tendency, who went beyond Latin America -- citing events elsewhere in the world -- to bolster his arguments on the "programmatic clarification" offered by the resolution, it is necessary to consider the document in relation to the position on this question held by the Fourth International since it was founded in 1938."

Change the last two paragraphs to read as follows:

"We come to another very important point. The resolution on "armed struggle" opens the way to all kinds of deviations of the most dangerous kind. For example, the leaders of the International Executive Committee Majority Tendency may contend that it has no connection with their position on armed struggle in

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Latin America, yet members of their tendency in Spain hailed the assassination of Carrero Blanco, and the Red Weekly of January 11, 1974, published a headline: "Spanish Trotskyists give total support to Carrero Blanco assassination." Naturally, no Trotskyists were involved in that assassination. The declarations of support, however, involved the most serious departure from the programmatic position of the world Trotskyist movement on armed struggle.

"I said that this resolution marks the completion of the turn adopted at the Ninth World Congress, the turn toward guerrilla war. This is not quite accurate. It can also be said to have opened a new stage. If adopted, it would place the Fourth International in a rather ignominious position -- standing on the sidelines hailing the "minority violence" committed by others. Could this position be maintained for long? I don't think so. The pressure would mount to go still further in departing from the programmatic position of Trotskyism on this question. I hope that the comrades will draw back from this road before it is too late. If they do not, our movement will face the most disastrous consequences. To turn resolutely away from this fatal perspective, the resolution on armed struggle must be defeated."

I have two other very small changes in the manuscript that do not involve any "security" question. It is the insertion of the adjective "older" in two places in the third to the last paragraph. The two first sentences would then read as follows:

"And sadly enough, some of the older leaders of the Fourth International, rather than seeking to overcome the ultraleft bias of these new recruits, bent to the pressure. As in the way they handled the non-Trotskyist PRT in Argentina, these older leaders drifted."

With regard to the points you raise in your letter of April 30, I would offer the following comments:

1. In taking out the public attacks on the PST contained in your resolution on Argentina, which are concentrated mostly in Point 36, you propose something that is hardly acceptable. Your formula of a footnote saying, "Point 36 of this resolution concerning the orientation of the PST is published in an Internal Bulletin," publicizes the subject matter dealt with in the point and thereby raises a series of questions that remain unanswered. It would seem preferable to simply renumber the points from 36 in the resolution, eliminating any need for a footnote.

2. The sentence you propose as a summary of the stand taken by the 1969 world congress on recognition of the PRT (Combatiente) appears to me to be inadequate and therefore misleading. The view that the PRT (Combatiente) represented "the continuity" of the Argentine section of the Fourth International was challenged by Comrade Moreno. He pointed specifically to the anti-Trotskyist positions expressed in El Unico Camino Hasta el Poder Obrero y el Socialismo.

The reporter for the majority assured the delegates that the positions expressed in that pamphlet did not represent the views of the leadership of the PRT (Combatiente). This assurance served to eliminate political considerations and to narrow the

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question down to a quantitative level. As you will no doubt recall, it was virtually impossible, in the underground conditions then prevailing in Argentina, to determine who actually held a majority. The delegates at the 1969 world congress found it extremely difficult to come to a decision. The balance finally tilted in favor of the PRT (Combatiente) because the Argentina delegates at the congress acknowledged its claim of having held a slim majority on the Central Committee when the split occurred in the Argentine section. The underground conditions made it impossible to ascertain the circumstances under which this majority was obtained.

I think that if an assessment is to be made of the decision of the Ninth World Congress on this question, the difficulty of determining who actually held a majority should be indicated. In all objectivity, too, the correctness of Comrade Moreno's warning as to the political positions of the PRT (Combatiente) ought to be acknowledged. He and Comrade Andres were the only ones at the congress to state where the PRT (Combatiente) really stood and what could be expected from it. It was unfortunate that they were not listened to more attentively.

As you can see, this is not at all a question of "linguistics" as you suggest in your letter of May 7, but of the objective truth concerning the decisions at the Ninth World Congress. A "self-criticism" concerning the PRT (Combatiente) that left this out, or, still worse, distorted what happened at the Ninth World Congress would certainly call for public rectification.

3. In my opinion, your reasons for rejecting publication of the edited versions of our resolutions on Bolivia and Argentina do not stand up very well. Your main argument is that they consist of "sharp attacks" on sections.

This is simply not so. They contain sharp attacks on the guerrilla orientation adopted at the Ninth World Congress. The two countries cited deal with the application of that line. Here the whole point is that the comrades of the two sections carried out the line to the best of their ability. They faithfully applied the line, and it turned out in practice to be disorienting. The disasters in Bolivia and Argentina were consequences of applying the general line adopted at the Ninth World Congress.

We offered our balance sheet on Argentina and Bolivia not out of a desire to "attack" the sections in those countries; but because it was precisely in these countries that the line was tested in practice.

Thus in refusing to publish our resolutions on Bolivia and Argentina on the grounds that they consist of nothing but "sharp attacks" on sections, you deny the right of members or supporters of the Fourth International to utilize the criterion of practice in judging the worth of a line adopted by a world congress, or at least to publish conclusions based on use of that criterion. That denial is totally unacceptable. To acquiesce in it would mean converting the Fourth International into a debating club that banned all concrete questions.

In rereading these resolutions, I will grant that what is said about the Bolivian comrades participating in the FRA is sharp. Here they carried the guerrilla orientation to extra-

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ordinary lengths. But does criticizing the involvement of the Bolivian comrades in the FRA constitute an "attack" on a section? As I see it, the criticism is an attack on a line adopted at a world congress that in practice led to such consequences. You interpret it as an attack on a section...

But by the same reasoning, you are then really duty bound to publish our resolution on Argentina. It does not contain a single word of criticism, let alone a "sharp attack" on a section or sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Argentina. The resolution, for instance, does not even incorporate our criticisms of the Fracción Roja, although we voiced our differences with the line of these comrades in no uncertain way at the world congress in February.

Thus even if your reasoning held for rejecting publication of our resolution on Bolivia -- which I do not concede -- by the same criterion you have no valid reason for not publishing our resolution on Argentina.

4. I shall now make some observations on what you say in defense of what you conceive as your right to include a public attack on the PST in your resolution on Argentina. In view of your agreement not to publish the attack, it should not be necessary to say any more. But I see that you appear to view your agreement not to publish the attack as some kind of concession or sacrifice, and that this feeling crops up in some of your other points. Consequently it might prove useful to make still clearer some of the things we already called attention to.

In this instance, the attack is an attack against a section (or sympathizing organization). The selection of "Morenoism" as the political axis of your polemic is sufficient proof. In the whole debate carried on in the international for the past several years this is the only case where such a political axis has been chosen.

For instance, in considering the practical application of your guerrilla-war orientation in Bolivia, we did not raise the scarecrow of "Gonzalezism." Again in Argentina, in analyzing the disastrous course of the PRT (Combatiente) we did not resort to such designations as "Santuchoism." And in discussing the defects of the European documents we did not describe them as manifestations of "Mandelism." To have resorted to such personalizations would have sharply increased tensions in the international, as I am sure you would be the first to recognize. You would have interpreted it under the circumstances as a deliberate decision on our part to intensify the centrifugal tendencies. How could you expect us to reason differently when we discovered that you had included an attack on "Morenoism" in a congress resolution that you proposed to make public?

Argentina and Bolivia became centers of attention in the international discussion because it was in these two countries that the guerrilla orientation adopted in 1969 was tested in practice. From that experience, the international could draw the lesson of events. The actions of the organized Trotskyist movement in these two countries were intimately involved, but aside from the practical outcome of the guerrilla orientation there was no reason to single out the sections or leaderships in these countries for assessment.

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There is no denying, of course, that something could be learned from a properly weighed balance sheet of the activities and capacities of most, if not all, of the sections and sympathizing organizations of the Fourth International. Perhaps this should be done at some congress, proceeding in alphabetical order. But this was not on the agenda at the Tenth World Congress.

Consequently your decision to single out the PST for such an assessment -- one going back decades and pegged to exposing "Morenoism" -- is completely out of place. You even concentrate on the PST to the exclusion of the other two sympathizing organizations in Argentina. Moreover, your balance sheet is not fairly drawn. It omits both the difficulties of the situation, the positive achievements of the PST, and the replies to your arguments (some of which come from sources other than the PST). The conclusion is inescapable that the purpose of such a polemic is not to illustrate the concrete consequences of the application of a general international line. It thus amounts to an attack on a section -- or, if you prefer, on "Morenoism." (I leave aside the possibility that the PST was chosen as a kind of "Albania" for an attack aimed in reality at another sector of the world Trotskyist movement.)

You indicate that you agree in the strongest way with this condemnation of the PST and with the arguments adduced to support the condemnation. I have no reason to doubt your sincerity in this.

But to make such an attack against the PST a matter of public record goes in violation of the nine-point agreement, a document voted for by an overwhelming majority at the congress. To publish your attack against the PST would thus violate the will of the congress.

In face of this elementary consideration, your other arguments are beside the point. You say, for instance, that your resolution "on Argentina was adopted by the world congress." You add that the "criticism of Moreno's past and present policies were not something surreptitiously introduced into that resolution at the last minute..."

It is true that your resolution on Argentina was adopted by the congress. The congress, however, did not vote to publish the "criticisms" of Moreno. And the fact that nothing was introduced surreptitiously means that the delegates were informed concerning your "criticisms." Hence all the less need to publish them. The decision to make them public was taken following the congress. It was taken by your faction.

You argue that if the "criticisms" are not publicly circulated then they should be included in the minutes of the world congress. This is a novel contention. If the "criticisms" were not surreptitiously introduced, then they are already the common property of the international. Why should they be included in the minutes? Doesn't that falsify the minutes, inasmuch as this question did not come before the delegates at the world congress?

If you merely want the members of the Fourth International to have in their possession your final edited version of the "criticisms" of Moreno, why don't you submit the text for the next

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issue of the internal bulletin, with democratic provisions for a reply?

5. Now as to the publication of the minutes in the form in which they appeared in English and your decision to demand their republication in a revised form.

First of all, the United Secretariat, with you present, went over the draft of the minutes and approved this draft after making various changes, all of which were incorporated in the published final draft. From what you say, I gather that you propose no further changes in the minutes themselves. What you now want is additions to the attachments, particularly in relation to the statement of your faction and our reply to it.

I think it was a mistake on your part to ask that a statement, drawn up by your faction long after the congress and the following IEC meeting, be attached to the minutes. Its proper place, in view of what you had in mind, should have been in the internal bulletin.

Without knowing what you intended to say in your statement, we acquiesced to your request out of our general policy of doing everything possible to reduce tensions. Naturally, we reserved the right to reply, which you agreed to as a matter of course in a "package deal." Actually our reserving the right to reply was only a precautionary measure. Had your statement been in the spirit of your closing remarks at the congress, I don't think we would have bothered to make a statement of our own. When we saw your statement and realized its nature, we had, of course, no alternative but to state our own position as clearly as possible.

As you indicate in your letter, you did not like our reply. Apparently you did not think things through when you took the initiative in proposing that belated statements be attached to the minutes. You now propose that you be permitted to attach a third statement, replying to ours, to which you add: "We are quite ready to grant you the right to make a like rebuttal, provided it keeps to a short statement of similar length." And you will not want to make a rebuttal to our rebuttal?

Isn't this becoming rather ridiculous? Doesn't it tend to convert the minutes of the world congress into a semi-internal bulletin in which questions that have arisen since the world congress are injected?

I do not understand why "the statement on the miners strike in Britain, the Chilean repression, the solidarity with the Greek students and workers, which the IEC was empowered to make in the name of the Congress" should be attached to the minutes of the congress. The IEC referred the question of drawing up the statements to the United Secretariat. All that had to be done was to issue the statements and publish them in the name of the world congress. What is the reason for taking statements, presumably published by all the main journals of the sections and sympathizing organizations, and attaching them to the minutes? Do we have to go to such lengths to make ourselves look absurd?

6. With regard to the very bad drift now observable in the international toward increased tensions, I note what you say

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about my concluding speech at the world congress on the desirability of lowering tensions in order to help maintain the unity of the movement and your supposition "that powerful pressure was brought to bear" on me to change my course, "and that these pressures unfortunately have already borne fruits."

But I have not changed my position. You overlook the fact that in not being in the majority I am not in position to decide the policy of the majority; I can only hope to influence the majority to act responsibly. The present state of affairs is the responsibility of the majority leadership. It is enough to list the main facts to prove that.

Your first move following the congress could hardly have been better calculated to counteract a reduction of tensions. This came at the IEC meeting where the incoming majority leadership announced its factional decisions on the makeup of the leading bodies.

First of all, you limited the representation of the minority unnecessarily. It was your right to do this, of course; but you thereby eliminated seven of our ten nominations, including five top leaders of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction, among them four former representatives on the United Secretariat and three of our reporters at the world congress.

Secondly, you made arbitrary demands as to the composition of that representation, denying the Leninist Trotskyist Faction the right to freely choose its own representatives. That was not your right.

I took the floor at that IEC meeting to argue -- within the framework of what I had said at the closing session of the congress -- that the majority was not displaying political wisdom in opening its stewardship in such a factional and highly ultimatic way.

No one in the majority seemed to pay much attention to what I had to say. My impression was that it had been decided in caucus to discount in advance whatever I might say. The same attitude seemed to have been adopted toward the other leaders of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction who took the floor to explain what difficulties were created by your postcongress ultimatum, particularly in relation to the problem of reducing tensions.

Despite the attitude displayed by the majority in organizing the incoming leadership, we still sought to follow the policy of seeking to lower tensions that we had announced at the close of the congress. Apparently our stand convinced the majority of your caucus that it was advisable to at least make a tactical shift, and we were granted a few weeks time to work out the problems we had been confronted with by the imposition of your formula on the composition of our representation.

During these weeks we managed to arrange for four leaders of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction to become resident at the center. This list included a figure like Hugo Blanco. Your response was hardly conducive to reducing tensions. You rejected our list out of hand and went ahead to set up a bureau consisting solely of members of your own faction.

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You are still following the same provocative policy. When we submitted a list of four comrades for positions on the United Secretariat, you rejected Comrade Arturo as not meeting your factional requirements.

Your arguments in justification of this decision are not very consistent. On page 3 of your letter, forgetting our nominations that you rejected at the IEC meeting, you say that one of the reasons for your doubts about "the willingness of the minority to apply its expressed intentions" of abiding by democratic centralism was that "the minority designated for participation in the leadership bodies of the FI not a single one of its previous representatives in the United Secretariat, and not a single [one] of its reporters at the world congress..." I leave aside an account, which might prove depressing, of the experiences of our "previous representatives" on the United Secretariat, and confine myself solely to the case of Comrade Arturo. The fact is that he meets one of the requirements you list -- he was the minority reporter on Argentina at the world congress.

Naturally I refuse to recognize such a criterion, which has never been advanced previously by anyone in the Fourth International so far as I know. Its arbitrariness is self-evident.

What is to the point is that Comrade Arturo is one of the central leaders of the largest sympathizing organization in the Fourth International. He is a member of the International Executive Committee, holding a consultative vote. According to the nine-point agreement passed by the world congress, consultative members of the IEC "have the same rights as full members in everything except voting." The agreement states "everything." The rule is the same as for alternates on the IEC, who also hold only a consultative vote.

It is a violation of the nine-point agreement to reject Comrade Arturo's candidacy as a member of the United Secretariat. In addition, it constitutes another infringement of the right of a minority in the Fourth International to select its own representatives.

I think this is sufficient to establish where the responsibility lies for the increase in tensions inside the Fourth International that began at the IEC meeting following the world congress. The responsibility lies with the International Majority Tendency leadership, which is following a policy of stepping-up the tensions.

In one of the paragraphs on page 3 of your letter, you ascribe "second thoughts" to me on the "possibility of applying the normal rules of democratic centralism inside a united world movement" and you claim that these alleged "second thoughts" have "no relation whatsoever to any 'provocative' act of the majority" but are "clearly of a political nature..."

You are wrong on this. I think it is quite possible to apply the normal rules of democratic centralism inside our movement. What we differ on is the course of action that you initiated with the postcongress IEC meeting. Neither your ultimatic demands concerning the composition of our representation nor your violations (or threatened violations) of the nine-point agreement approved by the world congress come within the normal rules

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of democratic centralism.

This judgment does not at all mean that I have changed my mind as to the need, in the overall interests of the Fourth International, to lower the tensions and to follow policies designed to achieve this. I still hold the same view that I expressed in behalf of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction at the closing session of the world congress. But I also observe that such a course is not being followed by the majority leadership. The majority is, in fact, following an opposite course of exacerbating tensions.

What is the explanation for this? I do not think that it is a matter of evil intentions or of warped personalities. The explanation is to be sought on the political level. At bottom what is involved is the guerrilla-war orientation adopted by the International Majority Tendency.

I explained this at a caucus meeting of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction in New York on March 12. You indicate in your letter that you received the bulletin containing a transcript of my remarks, so there is no need to repeat that explanation here. It is sufficient to note that the pressure on the majority leadership, causing it to adopt a policy of intensifying tensions rather than reducing them, comes from the sectors of your faction who want to throw caution to the wind in making further tests of the "armed struggle" orientation.

To acknowledge these political facts of life does not alter the desirability, from the viewpoint of the interests of the Fourth International as a whole, of changing the situation. But having monopolized the leadership of the international -- aside from formal meetings of the United Secretariat -- only the majority is in position to take the initiative in this. It has not done so. Thus I see no way of escaping the conclusion that the majority is defaulting in its obligation to follow a policy of reducing tensions.

Fraternally yours,

s/Joe

Translation

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Translation

Mexico City, May 1, 1974

Dear Mary-Alice:

Regarding the proposal we made to the GCI that we exchange reports about the world congress and that we hold a unification congress within four months: They accepted the exchange of reports and this has already been completed. But they did not agree to the proposal for a congress.

The exchange of reports took place in membership meetings of each organization held separately (only the membership in Mexico City). There were three reporters for them and three for us (even though only two of us were at the congress we added one reporter to make the number equal for each organization). Efrain, Roberto and I represented the Liga Socialista; Manuel, Ramiro and Castillo the GCI.

Fifty companeros were present at their membership meeting and they insisted on giving us a report on their membership according to which they have 86 members in Mexico City; but 30 (!) were excused from the meeting and another 6 were on political assignments in other cities. Their purpose was to "demonstrate" that Nestor's report was wrong when he said they had only 60 members. A question period followed our reports and we were able to reply immediately to each person who took the floor.

They centered their arguments against the PST and SWP. After we rebutted all of their arguments against the PST ("they have no self-defense," "they went to have lunch with Peron," "they participated in the elections," etc.), they aimed their fire at the SWP ("it has a sectoralist conception," "its main activity right now is to sue the government in order to get money," "it's tailendist," etc.). This got them nowhere either and they wound up by slandering the Liga Socialista for considering the Echevarria government "Kerenskyist." By luck we had a copy of El Socialista with us which clearly put forth our position on this point so they changed their accusations saying that we considered the government "Kornilovist" rather than "Kerenskyist."

In reality, the most important thing stipulated as a condition for unification with the Liga Socialista was that we carry out in practice the Resolution on Armed Struggle in Latin America. We asked them what this meant for Mexico at this time. We are still waiting for their reply.

The truth is that they are divided on this question. On the one hand Manuel thinks that "the conditions are not yet ripe"; on the other hand Ramiro is more determined to begin "defense" activity for demonstrations and to "prepare the party." It is easy to see that our question has caused an internal crisis for them.

More than 100 comrades attended our membership meeting. The GCI reported only on Latin America and on the significance of the congress. Here the central point was Coral's recent meeting with Peron. This time their position on the SWP was a little different: "The SWP is a party that has remained within the framework of orthodox Trotskyism, perhaps it is also a little

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conservative, but its crime lies in having opened the doors to the 'Morenoites.'" The Liga Socialista is better than either the PST or the SWP. Their main charge was that we are too "conservative" and that we believe the Transitional Program is a sacred text which already says all that is to be said.

Then they restated their position that unification could only take place if we carried out the resolutions. We have already sent them an official letter asking what is meant by this.

Josefina