

4 February 1976

Jack Barnes  
New York

Dear Jack:

I am enclosing my message to the IEC with this letter. I am asking you to forward it to the IEC meeting.

As you will see, I have clearly stated my positions on the questions before this IEC meeting.

I believe that we must be willing to make certain compromises, on secondary organizational questions, in order to have a full discussion on the question of Portugal.

The key task of this IEC is to propose a common political program for the Portuguese revolution. This must be seen as the major question for all the leaders who will attend the IEC meeting.

With warm greetings,

Comradely,

*Peng Shu-tse*

Peng Shu-tse

P.S. I copy of my message has also been sent directly to the Brussels address in care of Benson.

To the Members of the International Executive Committee

Dear Comrades:

I regret very much that I am unable to attend this very important plenum of the I.E.C. I should like to submit the following proposal for discussion on the Portuguese revolution.

The revolution in Portugal has been of central importance to the world since the overthrow of the Caetano dictatorship in April 1974.

Unfortunately, up until now, the 4th International has not developed a common political program on this most historical event.

The two Trotskyist groups in Portugal are divided and in opposition to each other. This is a lamentable phenomenon in a revolutionary situation. But, the responsibility for this phenomenon is not with the Portuguese comrades, who are both young and inexperienced, it rests completely with the leadership of the 4th International. Our International remains divided into two major factions, in serious dispute with each other.

This situation---a divided International having no common political program for the Portuguese masses, must end at once. Otherwise, it will create disastrous results for the Portuguese revolution and for the International as a whole.

We must understand that a victorious revolution in Portugal would provide a powerful impetus to the working class in Spain, and the masses throughout western Europe. Inversely, if the revolution is defeated, it will deal an immediate blow to the workers struggle in Spain; demoralize the masses in Europe; and, most serious of all, create severe confusion in the ranks of the world Trotskyist movement.

For these reasons, I must urge all the members of the IEC to seriously reconsider the question of the Portuguese revolution and the political program necessary for advancing that revolution.

The situation in Portugal is quite critical, especially since the formation of the Sixth Government. A government based on the most reactionary officers of the MFA, supported by the SP and PDP. A government which is moving toward the camp of western imperialism.

The Sixth Government is preparing for a real military dictatorship as a transitional step toward a fascist regime. The abolition of democratic rights such as the right to assemble, to demonstrate, strike, etc.; the suspension of the wage increases won by the workers; and the suppression of the

ultraleft revolt, are ominous signs of the tendency of this reactionary government.

On the other hand, the working class has not been defeated, but has suffered a temporary setback led by the opportunist Communist Party and Socialist Party.

The antigovernment demonstration of more than 100,000 called by the unions and workers commissions of Lisbon demonstrate clearly the existence of the workers organizations. This action demonstrates the continuing potential for mass revolutionary struggle in Portugal. It is inevitable that the Sixth Government will be plunged into future crises, and these will create new upsurges of the Portuguese working class.

Central to the Portuguese revolution, is the need for a revolutionary leadership. Unfortunately, there is no mass revolutionary party in Portugal today which can counterpose itself to the opportunist policies of the CP and SP in order to attract and lead workers, peasants and soldiers to a revolutionary orientation.

The Trotskyist organizations in Portugal are small and divided. We cannot create a mass revolutionary party overnight, based on our small, inexperienced cadres.

What the 4th International must do now is offer a correct common political program for the revolution. A program which will enable the two Trotskyist groups in Portugal to unify rapidly. This must be our starting point, it is a decisive one.

A correct political program must be based on the Transitional Program and the experiences of the Russian Revolution. The content of this program should include the following:

1. Land Reform.

A clear and thorough-going land reform must be a central part of our program. The large landowners' property must be confiscated and distributed to the landless peasants. Some of the large farms in Portugal today have the conditions for collectivization, these must be turned into cooperative-farms run by the workers. As to the small and middle farmers, it is not sufficient to call only for "no confiscation of their land"; we must also propose financial support to these farmers with loans, modern agricultural equipment, new irrigation projects, etc.

2. Nationalization of all capitalist property.

This is a precondition for preparing the base for a planned economy. The Portuguese workers have already, spontaneously, occupied a considerable number of factories, banks, insurance companies, etc. This demonstrates that the Portuguese workers took steps more radical than their brothers in the October Revolution. It was the objective conditions in Portugal that forced the workers to take such steps.

3. For a workers and farmers government.

The central task of this formula, a "workers and farmers government", "...consists in freeing the proletariat from the old leadership, whose conservatism is in complete contradiction to the catastrophic eruptions of disintegrating capitalism and represents the obstacle to historical progress...". Quoted from the Transitional Program.

At the present time, this slogan is raised to expose the "conservatism" of the CP and SP in order to free the masses from their influence.

The call for a "workers and farmers government" is of great educational value to the masses. But, it is not enough to raise only this slogan.

4. For workers, peasants and soldiers soviets.

In a revolution, the working masses historical task is to take power from the bourgeoisie. The soviets are the only organizational form which can organize the workers, peasants and soldiers together. It is only the soviets which can prepare the insurrection for taking power.

The call for soviets must be raised at the beginning of a revolution, as we have learned from the Russian Revolution, and the lessons of the defeat of the second Chinese revolution.

Because the International has lacked a common program on Portugal, we did not raise this central slogan. It must now be incorporated into our program. In my opinion, as I have already stated, the revolutionary situation still exists in Portugal and it is not too late to correct our weakness on this point.

In Portugal, there have existed a number of workers and neighborhood commissions, as well as soldiers and sailors assemblies and committees. These are embryonic soviets.

We must be based on these embryonic soviets in order to expand them throughout Portugal; to the cities, the countryside and in the army.

It is necessary to emphasize the decisive role of the soldier soviets. In the present situation in Portugal, the soldiers are still controlled by the officers of the MFA. This is a dangerous situation for the revolution. If the worker and peasant masses cannot win the soldiers to the side of the revolution (through the formation of soldier soviets), then the reactionary army officers will use the soldiers to prepare a coup d'etat, thereby suppressing the revolutionary masses.

The experience of the Chilean coup d'etat in 1973 was an important lesson for the working masses and the revolutionary leadership. The failure to organize the soldier soviets led to the defeat of the Chilean revolution. We must learn from this tragic experience and from these lessons propose a correct political program for the Portuguese revolution.

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It is my belief that this IEC meeting must take a program, as I have outlined, as the political orientation for the Portuguese revolution.

In addition to developing a common political orientation on the Portuguese revolution, there are also important practical tasks which the IEC must begin to organize.

1. The International leadership must launch a campaign to provide financial aid to the Portuguese comrades. In my opinion, each member of the 4th International must be called upon to make financial contributions to the Portuguese revolution. Alleviating the financial pressure from the Portuguese comrades will enable them to carry out the International's program.

We must also call on organizations still outside the 4th International, to financially support the Trotskyist groups in Portugal.

The IEC should appoint a commission of comrades, their task would be to meet with the leadership of such groups as the OCI, Lutte Ouvriere, International Socialists, the Pabloite organizations, etc, to discuss the need for financial aid to the Trotskyist groups in Portugal.

2. The International should send capable comrades to Portugal. These comrades can assist the Portuguese comrades in their day-to-day work, especially in regard to the

publication of the Trotskyist press, a most important tool for propaganda.

The unification of the two Trotskyist groups in Portugal, based on a common program of the 4th International, will provide the first step necessary toward influencing the masses, winning the revolutionary elements within the CP and SP to our program, and organizing a revolutionary party capable of advancing the Portuguese revolution.

Another important question before this IEC is the position the International will adopt on Angola.

The civil war in Angola grows more serious with each day. From the facts available to me, and here I must state that I have not had the opportunity to study the programs of the three nationalist groups in Angola, I believe the general political situation clearly divides the nationalist groups into two camps.

The first camp being that of the MPLA, supported by the Soviet Union and Cuba. The second consisting of the FLNA and UNITA, supported by American and European imperialism, and the South Africa regime.

In such a situation, it is my opinion, that we should use the tactic of critical support to the MPLA. We should recall that in the Vietnam civil war we gave critical support to the NLF, which was supported by the bureaucratic Stalinists in Moscow and Peking. The criterion for support to the MPLA is the same one we used in giving critical support to the NLF.

It is reasonable for us, at this time, to give critical support to the MPLA. But, a condition for this support must be a call on the MPLA to begin negotiations with the FLNA and UNITA for unification. And, this unification must be based on the condition that all groups break relations with the imperialist powers.

In summary, let me repeat once again, that the IEC must take a definite common political program for the Portuguese revolution. This common program must be used as the basis for unification of the Trotskyist groups in Portugal.

Only by taking these steps will the leadership of the International demonstrate it is responsible to the revolution, and prove itself capable of carrying out the 4th International's historical task. The leadership of the International must be responsible for the revolution, not based on any tendency or faction.

To the Members of the IEC

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Finally, I should point out, quite frankly, that a dangerous situation exists inside the International. Because of splits in many sections, much of our comrades' time and energy has been spent debating organizational questions.

If the International continues in this fashion, it will fall into disasterous consequences---the degeneration of the 4th International. It is high time to end such a lamentable situation.

The taking of a correct political program on the Portuguese revolution, will be the first step taken to turn the present situation of the International back to a sound one.

I appeal to all the members of the IEC to center our efforts on advancing the Portuguese revolution.

Comradely,

*Peng Shu-tse*

Peng Shu-tse

February 4, 1976