November 1, 1975

To Leninist Trotskyist Coordinators

Dear Comrades,

The United Secretariat met on October 4-5. Although we have not yet received any minutes, enclosed you will find copies of two motions presented by the IMT and adopted by the United Secretariat majority at that meeting.

Also enclosed in this mailing are the following items:

1. A statement by the IMT steering committee on October 10 (received October 30).

2. A communique from the Central Committee of the LCI to all sections and sympathizing organizations concerning the conduct of Comrades Aubin and Duret in Portugal.

3. Two letters from Pierre Lambert, and a reply from Jack Barnes.

Comradely,

John Benson

[Note: National Committee members have received copies of item No. 3 with the minutes of the October 9, 1975, Political Committee meeting.]

Motion Passed at the October 4-5, 1975,
United Secretariat Meeting

The US notes that the journal Intercontinental Press, a journal which is an important collaborative project within the forces politically in solidarity with the International since the reunification and which has as associate editors members of the US from several different countries, has in this past period been putting forward in editorials and a long series of articles a political line which is not that decided by the 10th World Congress (Fourth Congress after reunification) or of the bodies elected out of that congress (IEC and US). This is in particular the case on the issues raised by the developments of the Vietnamese and Portuguese revolutions and the prerevolutionary crisis in Spain. On all these issues, clear positions were taken either by the political resolution adopted by the 10th World Congress by the theses on the building of revolutionary parties in Europe or by the resolutions of the US in application of the documents adopted by the World Congress; but this line is not reflected in the editorials and central articles on the questions noted above. The US places on the agenda of the next meeting a discussion of what measures are to be taken to ensure that ICP accurately reflects the line adopted by the leading bodies of the International. The framework of this discussion is of course the fact that articles 8,12,19 and 43 of the statutes of the International, unanimously voted at the 10th World Congress clearly lay down that while the elected bodies of the world movement have no power to determine the tactical line of national sections and sympathising organisations for their own countries, nor to determine or modify the composition of leaderships of national sections, on all other matters and especially on matters of international politics and attitudes to adopt towards important international events, the final authority of the world movement is placed in the democratically elected leading bodies of the International and the decisions of these bodies are binding.

The right to express dissent and to debate majority positions is guaranteed by the democratic structure of our movement. It can be carried on in international internal discussion bulletins, whose publication is organized by the US, or it can under given circumstances even lead to public discussions if so decided by the leading bodies of the FI. Public discussions are in no way contrary to the spirit of democratic centralism as applied in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky's Communist International. But such discussion articles must be clearly presented as such, when they appear in the public press. They can in no way absolve organs purporting to speak in the name of the International from their duty to carry out the line decided upon by majority vote in the leading bodies.

Motion Passed at the October 4-5, 1975,
United Secretariat Meeting

The U.S. notes the confusion, misunderstandings and increase in tensions created by and following the invitation of the OCRFI to the convention of the SWP. The US considers it necessary to take all steps to avoid similar confusions, misunderstandings or exacerbations of tensions in future. The process of discussion, regroupment and fusions with various forces and all initiatives which lie in that direction are indispensable in the construction of the International. However, these steps are only of value from a point of view of the goal of the construction of a mass revolutionary international if they lead to a strengthening and not a weakening of the programme, the cadre, the national sections and the international organisation of the FI as a world party and they do not have the effect of exacerbating tensions, or obscuring political differences within it. Such consideration and the need for a concerted and unambiguous response are particularly applicable in the case of an organisation such as the OCRFI which has clearly and explicitly stated its purpose as effecting a split in the International between "genuine Trotskyists" and "Pablo-ites," which has consistently used the worst tactics of political slander, and which is utilising physical violence within the worker movement.

In order to ensure a unified response to the approach of the OCRFI, to safeguard the International and its cadres from potential operations of a splitting or maneuverist character, to ensure the closest integration in whatever response is decided to the OCRFI and to avoid a multiplication of suspicions and tensions, the US decides to centralise all relations with the OCRFI through its hand and that all sections and sympathising sections and all those in political solidarity with the FI shall not take any further step or initiative of any kind in collaboration with the requests of the OCRFI before a new discussion has taken place on the US and before a decision has been taken by this body on each specific initiative.

IMT Steering Committee Statement

October 10, 1975

1. The Steering Committee of the IMT notes that the political differences inside the Fourth International have deepened considerably as the result of the international minority faction's wrong analyses and reactions to the unfolding of the socialist revolution in Portugal. These wrong positions, now codified in the minority faction steering committee statement of August 31, 1975, have placed the minority on record as giving top priority to the struggle for democratic demands in a revolutionary situation in an imperialist country, not even mentioning the key need to build soviets and to fight for workers power among the six "main axes" of Trotskyist policy in the revolutionary process now unfolding in Portugal. This is a fundamental departure from the line for such situations developed in the Transitional Program and defended by Lenin and Trotsky during the Russian revolution of 1917, the German revolution of 1918-1923, the Spanish revolution of 1936, and the mass upsurge in France in 1934-36. It involves a further development of the incipient revisionism of the minority faction on such questions as nationalism and confusion between the democratic rights of the masses and the institutions of the bourgeois state. It throws significant light on the basic reasons for which the minority faction rejected the "Thesis on the Building of Revolutionary Parties in Europe," and for which it seems obsessed by the fight against "ultraleftism" as the main danger in all countries. The differences now revolve around the central question of how to build revolutionary parties in prerevolutionary and revolutionary situations in imperialist countries, what are the key tasks to be solved during a revolutionary mass upsurge in such countries, and what must be the central thrust of revolutionary Marxist activity within the mass movement in order to make it impossible for the reformist and Stalinist bureaucracies to prevent this movement from overthrowing the bourgeois state machine and the capitalist mode of production.

2. The Steering Committee of the IMT further notes that the international minority faction has seriously compounded these grave political deviations by organizational measures and attitudes that tend to place into question the existence of the Fourth International as a world party based upon democratic centralism as outlined in the statutes unanimously adopted by the Tenth World Congress. The transformation of Intercontinental Press into a de facto public faction organ on questions such as Portugal, Angola, and Vietnam, systematically presenting the positions of the minority faction and not those adopted by the democratically elected bodies of the FI; the unilateral decision to invite the OCRFI (Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the FI) to the SWP convention without prior consultation with the United Secretariat and without prior agreement on this question; and the use in the minority faction's steering committee statement of the term "world Trotskyist movement" supposedly including some forces outside of the FI are ominous signs of a trend--whether intentional or objective, that remains to be seen--toward transforming the FI into a loose and non-committing federation of factions and national groupings debating on all questions but acting in common only on those questions on which there

is unanimous agreement, a concept Trotsky fought against with all his strength during the last seven years of his life.

3. The Steering Committee of the IMT therefore defines the purpose of ites tendency fight as a fight to defend the programmatic, political, and organizational integrity of the Fourth International, now seriously threatened by the incipient revisionist course of the minority faction. It decides to incorporate the general line followed by the FI leadership on Portugal--as expressed in the USec resolution on Portugal of June 1, 1975, and the article by comrades Pierre Frank, Livio Maitan, and Ernest Mandel in answer to Gerry Foley and Joseph Hansen of August 15,1975--into the basic platform of the IMT. It empowers the IMT Bureau to prepare a draft balance-sheet on the analysis and polemics on Portugal for the November 1975 USec meeting, to be incorporated into the basic documents of the IMT.

At the same time, the IMT Steering Committee, while recognizing the gravity of the political differences that have arisen within the FI and the importance of the political debate that has started and will unfold on these differences, reaffirms its basic orientation followed since the Ninth World Congress on the question of the tendency struggle inside the FI:

(a) The key priority for the FI today is external expansion and external activity. It is vital for the FI to continue and step up its promising growth since 1968 to intervene in the unfolding prerevolutionary and revolutionary situations, in which we can already intervene with significant forces, in such a way as to make possible a new qualitative leap forward toward the building of revolutionary Marxist mass parties.

(b) The nature of the political differences inside the FI has not created a principled basis for a split of the FI. We are resolutely opposed to any split course, either internationally or nationally. We must make the utmost effort to reverse the dangerous drift toward several organizations being affiliated to the FI in the same country, by struggling for the reunification of these forces at least in a certain number of countries as a short-term perspective.

4. The Steering Committee of the IMT notes that the statement issued by the international minority faction's steering committee expresses its conviction that organized factions and tendencies should be dissolved in favor of purely ideological formations. The IMT never was a faction and is not a faction today. Its Steering Committee concurs with the conviction that the maintenance of factions and structured tendencies on a more or less permanent basis after congresses is not normal in a Leninist organization and inhibits political clarification, even if it does not break the statutory rules. However, in the opinion of the IMT Steering Committee, the expressed desire of the minority faction to dissolve factions and structured tendencies is strongly contradicted by the practical evolution of that faction, especially since May 1975, which has led to a serious increase of organizational tensions within the world movement:

(a) As a result of the unjustifiable delay in applying the January IEC recommendations concerning a reintegration of the IT into the SWP and the violation of the IEC recommendation for collective reintegration and the substitution of individual reaaplication;

(b) As a result of the unjustifiable delay in regularizing the minority faction's support of common projects of the world movement;

(c) As a result of the dangerous drift toward transforming the FI into a federation of public factions or sections, notably through continuous public breaches of discipline with respect to World Congress, IEC, and USec political resolutions, and the growing transformation of Intercontinental Press into a public minority faction organ;

(d) As a result of the unilateral decision of the SWP leadership to invite the OCRFI to the SWP convention;

(e) As a result of an increasing functioning of minority faction representatives in disregard of the normal bodies and rules of the movement, operating as a faction that tries in several countries to contact, influence, and organize militant and groupings outside the normal channels of the FI and its national organizations, travel internationally without prior information and consultation of the international leadership, subordination of participation in official leadership bodies to faction activities, etc.

Only if and when the minority faction corrects these violations of the norms of democratic centralism within the FI can organization tensions be reduced, can the debate really center around the serious differences that have arisen around the problems of the Portuguese revolution, and can concrete steps for the actual dissolution of factions and structured tendencies be undertaken in practice, without endangering the organization integrity of the FI. The IMT Steering Committee pledges itself to make all necessary moves in that direction, as soon as the minority faction proves in practice that it is removing the five above-mentioned obstacles on the road toward this commonly desired goal. The IMT Steering Committee reaffirms its conviction that within the framework of respect for democratic centralism as defined by the statutes--which imply the duty of all sections to apply in public the line decided upon by the democratically elected leadership bodies on international questions--publicly conducted debates are not only permissible but useful and in no way contradict the organizational principles of Leninism.

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[The following communique was received in New York on October 31, 1975.]

CONCERNING THE ACTIVITY OF COMRADES AUBIN AND DURET, MEMBERS OF THE UNITED SECRETARIAT, IN PORTUGAL

Comrades Aubin and Duret, representatives of the United Secretariat, have up to now behaved in an openly factional way, trying to unite members and groups of members around their proposals through meetings organized outside any control by, or even the knowledge of, the leadership.

So far, the comrades have not held any serious discussion with the fulltime leadership of the LCI because, when they had a choice, they have always preferred contacts with one or another member.

They have always avoided initiating discussion with the leadership on the real political differences and have chosen the obscure work we just referred to.

In view of these facts, the Central Committee of the LCI resolves:

1. to make the situation known to the United Secretariat and to all the sections and sympathizing organizations of the Fourth International through a letter to be drawn up by the Executive Committee;

2. to demand an explanation from the United Secretariat of the specific tasks Comrades Aubin and Duret are accomplishing in Portugal at this time;

3. to firmly insist that these comrades abandon their present practices, and to warn them that these will not be tolerated by an organization that adheres to Leninism;

4. to immediately open a debate with the United Secretariat concerning the FUR, the SP, etc., by actively participating in the international debate on the situation in Portugal.

CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE LCI

TRANSLATION TRANSLATION

ORGANISATION COMMUNISTE INTERNATIONALISTE

(pour la Reconstruction de la 4 Internationale)

Paris, September 23, 1975

Jack Barnes
National Secretary, SWP

Dear Comrade:

First I should like to thank you for the fraternal reception you accorded to our delegation and for the facilities that you made available to them so that they could inform themselves as completely as possible on all the various activities of the SWP.

Comrade François has reported to us on the SWP convention and our Central Committee has thus been able to study the step forward taken by your party.

The Central Committee of the OCI has assigned me to invite the SWP to send a delegation to the Twentieth Convention of the OCI which will take place in Paris December 26-30, 1975.

As both sides put it at the time of the meeting with a delegation of the United Secretariat on October 15, 1974, the discussion on the problems raised by the Tenth Congress of the United Secretariat -- which, according to the expression used in your declaration of January 2, 1975, on the subject of this meeting, concern "all organizations claiming to be Trotskyist" -- must be followed up in one way or another. But it would be preferable, in the interests of Trotskyism, if this were done in a common, organized framework.

It was from this concern, and the desire to give a certain form to the debate, that the decision to exchange internal documents was arrived at. The decision taken by your leadership to invite the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International to attend the SWP convention, with the status of observers, fits into this framework.

Likewise, it is from the same approach that our Central Committee has decided to invite the SWP to send a delegation to our convention. Your delegates may, if they wish, have speaking rights in the discussions at our convention.

We will send you shortly the agenda for the convention and, as they appear, the documents submitted for discussion.

Accept, dear comrade, my fraternal Trotskyist salutations.

For the Central Committee of
the OCI

Pierre Lambert

TRANSLATION TRANSLATION

ORGANISATION COMMUNISTE INTERNATIONALISTE

(pour la Reconstruction de la 4 Internationale)

Paris, September 23, 1975

Jack Barnes
National Secretary, SWP

Dear Comrade:

In a few days we will send you a short reply to the article signed by Mandel, Maitan, and Frank, which appeared in the IP of September 8, 1975.

This reply seems to us all the more necessary because we are directly attacked in this article and in a manner that we consider unfair.

We propose that this reply appear in Intercontinental Press.

But, as you know, Comrade Moreno in passing through Paris had a brief meeting with some members of our Central Committee. He stressed in particular how important the question of the form of the discussion is, at a moment when necessarily this discussion -- and in particular the debate on the problems of the Portuguese revolution -- must become public. Comrade Moreno was conveying here the opinion of the responsible leaders of the international faction with which you are in political solidarity. And by "form" we think that what is involved concerns not only "tone," but also the consideration of the opportune moment to publish this or that document in this or that publication, etc.

Hence, while we think that it would be a positive thing if our answer were to appear in Intercontinental Press, we are prepared to take into account your opinion on this subject and we do not by any means present the question of its possible publication in the columns of Intercontinental Press as an obligation in regard to the "right of reply" but as a proposition which must be considered from the standpoint of the necessities and the depth of the discussion.

The same attitude holds, it goes without saying, for the form of your presence at the convention of the OCI. We are aware of the fact that the relations between the SWP and the OCI take place, for you, in a framework accepted by the United Secretariat. Hence, if you consider it necessary, we have no objection to inviting the US to attend our forthcoming convention.

In any case, in the framework of the preparation of the convention, it is necessary that our members should be informed of the international activities of our Central Committee. To fulfill this obligation we ask from you authorization to publish in an internal bulletin the whole of the correspondence concerning the evolution of our relations since October 1974.

Fraternally,
Pierre Lambert

copy to J. Hansen

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14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
October 9, 1975

Dear Comrade Lambert,

Thank you for your two letters dated September 23, 1975.

We are happy to hear that you have decided to invite the United Secretariat of the Fourth International to observe the convention of the OCI. The address of the United Secretariat has been changed since your last correspondence. It is now: Gisela Scholtz, Boite Postale 1166, 1000 Brussels, Belgium. It would be good for you to send copies of the agenda and documents directly to the above address as they come out.

The SWP Political Committee appreciates your invitation to send observers to your convention. Could you send us three copies of each of your documents as they are printed?

We, of course, have no objection to your informing your membership through internal bulletins of your correspondence with the United Secretariat and other groups. However, none of the internal material that we began exchanging according to the agreement of the meeting of October 15 should be made public unless it has been released by those concerned.

We did not know about the meeting you had with Comrade Moreno when he passed through Paris until we read about it in your letter. The LTF steering committee met at the end of August, but it did not ask anyone to initiate such a meeting.

I have not yet received the reply you said you intended to write in response to the article by Comrades Pierre Frank, Livio Maitan and Ernest Mandel which appeared in the September 8, 1975, Intercontinental Press. We assume that when it is finished you will send a copy of the reply to the United Secretariat at the above address.

We are forwarding copies of your two letters to the United Secretariat and also to Comrade Moreno.

Comradely,
/s/
Jack Barnes
for the Political Committee
Socialist Workers Party

cc: United Secretariat
Hugo Moreno