

June 17, 1975

TO THE LENINIST TROTSKYIST COORDINATORS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed are the following items:

1. A letter from Comrades Maitan, Mandel and Frank to the editor of Intercontinental Press objecting to the line of the News Analysis in the June 2, 1975 issue, dealing with the seizure of Republica and a reply from the editor.
2. A statement adopted by the IMT bureau concerning the IT and the recent National Committee plenum of the SWP.
3. A letter from Bill Massey to the United Secretariat, informing them of his resignation from the IEC.
4. A letter from Pierre Lambert to Joe Hansen, and a reply.
5. A report by Johnson on the national conference of the IMG held at the end of March 1975.
6. A letter from a comrade in Germany with further information concerning the recent convention of the GIM, and an English translation of a document on electoral tactics submitted to the preconference discussion by Siegfried Kreisler of the IIT.

Comradely,

Ed Shaw

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June 5, 1975

To the Editor of Intercontinental Press

Dear Joe,

"Intercontinental Press" published in its June 2, 1975 issue an editorial ("News Analysis") under the title "The Seizure of 'Republica' -- a bad omen," with which we strongly disagree.

We are of course in favor of the freedom of the press, and we support the right of the Socialist Party to have its own newspaper, published uncensored in any way. But we believe that the authors of the said editorial seriously misread the meaning of the "Republica" incident, its significance at the present stage of the revolutionary process in Portugal, and the main dangers which today threaten the way forward of the Portuguese revolution.

We especially take exception with the fourth and fifth paragraph of p. 723 of that article in which the struggle for workers control and workers councils is presented as something proposed by the military and described by pejorative terms like "neo-archivist propaganda of the CP's ultraleft satellites, which have made a fetish of 'grass roots organization' abstracted from political democracy and general political solutions." We are on the contrary of the opinion that the struggle for setting up, generalizing and centralizing workers councils is today the main task in Portugal and that there are no general political solutions outside such moves, culminating in the seizure of power by these councils. That line was endorsed by the United Secretariat in its resolution on Portugal, adopted at its May 31-June 1 session.

If the article with which we disagree would have been just an individual contribution to "Intercontinental Press," we could have rested matters there, expressing our disagreement to you. But as the article is presented in editorial form, and leaves at least the impression with the readers of "Intercontinental Press" that it has some editorial status, we, as contributing editors, cannot take responsibility for what we consider an incorrect stand which implies a serious lack of understanding of what are today the key issues of the Portuguese revolution, and the central conditions for moving forward and avoiding grave defeats. We therefore ask you to print as soon as possible the enclosed article by Ernest Mandel in "Intercontinental Press." We have deliberately abstained from signing this article collectively, or from engaging in polemics with the June 2, 1975 "News Analysis" piece, in order not to heat up matters.

Fraternally yours,

s/ Ernest Mandel

s/ Pierre Frank

s/Livio Maitan

June 11, 1975

Dear Ernest, Pierre, and Livio:

I received your joint letter of June 5 yesterday. We will try to get the article by Ernest, which you enclosed, into the next issue of Intercontinental Press, catching, of course, the typographical errors and similar trivia.

You say that you "strongly disagree" with the article in the News Analysis section of the June 2 issue of Intercontinental Press, "The Seizure of 'Republica'--a Bad Omen," and that you consider the authors "seriously misread the meaning of the 'Republica' incident, its significance at the present stage of the revolutionary process in Portugal, and the main dangers which today threaten the way forward of the Portuguese revolution."

If you consider Ernest's article to be a corrective, then I think you misread the purpose of the article. It had only one aim--to lodge a protest against the blow struck against freedom of the press in Portugal. In explaining the protest, we outlined the facts, which had been treated in a sensational and biased way in the news media. We stood on the position outlined by Trotsky on this subject in 1938 (which we published in the following issue). I think the article was in complete conformity with Trotsky's statement of where revolutionary Marxists should stand in such cases. If you think otherwise, it would be in order to explain your reasoning.

In my opinion, it was absolutely essential for everyone who claims to adhere to Trotskyism to speak out on the Republica affair without delay, without equivocation, and without giving a millimeter to the Stalinists, who played their usual counterrevolutionary role in facilitating the government's repressive action. I think that if Intercontinental Press had not spoken out forthrightly and immediately the way it did, the editor could have been correctly charged with dereliction of duty.

The Republica affair met with an uncertain response from the world Trotskyist movement as a whole. While some sectors took a correct position, others made bad errors, showing that some comrades are not well grounded in the principles involved and that they were taken in by various arguments given currency above all by the Stalinists. The development of the Portuguese revolution is obviously submitting all tendencies in the workers movement internationally to a fresh test, including the tendencies in our own ranks.

As for Ernest's article, I must say frankly that while he makes some good points, his interpretation of the Republica affair--which seems to be the main point of his article--strikes me as quite wrong. For instance, he plays down the importance of the attempt to shut down this newspaper. That approach, in my opinion, is a political error. In Lisbon, it would have meant at best standing on the sidelines during the mass demonstrations protesting the closure. Comments from the sidelines on how freedom

of the press would operate in a healthy workers state would no doubt be listened to, but the demonstrators might ask rather brusquely, "Are you with us or against us in this instance?"

Worst of all is the impression created of seeking to exculpate the Stalinists and the MFA. Cunhal is handled as a provincial caught in a trap of his own making. From Ernest's article you would never know that he is Moscow's local agent, charged with taking care of the Soviet bureaucracy's diplomatic needs, particularly as they relate to the detente and its expression in Portugal. The blame for initiating the affair is placed on the workers in the printshop, who are pictured as having operated naively on their own. Doesn't this give credence to the Stalinist version of what happened?

A political concession of this kind can be quite damaging. We need sharp, clear differentiation from the Stalinists and unambiguous exposures of their real roles, precisely on such issues and as soon as they arise.

Even the MFA gets off lightly in Ernest's article. In a serious Marxist analysis, the government decree and the use of troops to close down Republica demand explanation, it seems to me. Yet Ernest does not even mention these items. This in turn requires explanation. How could Ernest happen to overlook them?

Another curiosity is that while Ernest refers to the vote cast by workers for the Socialist party, he says nothing about the mobilization of workers in opposition to the MFA-Stalinist attempt to eliminate Republica from the political scene. What is the explanation for that omission?

I agree with the designation of the policy of the Socialist party leaders as "counterrevolutionary." They play a role symmetrical to that of the Stalinists. Yet I note that Ernest does not call the Stalinists counterrevolutionary. Do you believe that in Portugal the Stalinists are playing a less counterrevolutionary role than the Social Democrats?

While designating the Social Democrats as counterrevolutionary, we should nonetheless be careful about the facts in the situation. Ernest, for example, levels the following accusation: "The Socialist Party has the right to have its own newspaper. But it has no right to lay off printing workers, or to reduce their wages, or to make their working conditions harsher, under the pretext they are 'undisciplined' and in disagreement with the political line of that Party." I had not seen this charge previously. Was this really the case?

The differences that you indicate you have over the two paragraphs toward the end of the IP article on the Republica affair are obscure to me. The two paragraphs you single out are rather parenthetical, referring to the government's efforts to create a political structure of its own that will enable it in the coming period to dispose of the class-collaborationist but cumbersome services of the Communist and Socialist parties. The two paragraphs merely mention the fact that the military regime is uti-

Hansen/3

lizing any means at its disposal to advance this project, including using radical-sounding demagoguery and taking advantage of the phrasemongering of the ultralefts.

You do not seem to disagree with the accuracy of the point, since Ernest makes a similar reference in his article; i.e., the leaders of the Armed Forces Movement want to "restore discipline" and some of them "believe it to be particularly clever to cover such a move by a proposal to create some kind of plant committees, but under military control and geared essentially to 'increasing production.'"

The two paragraphs were not intended to outline a program written from afar for suggested use by our comrades in Portugal. Still less were the two paragraphs intended to indicate opposition to applying the method outlined in the Transition Program and advancing the necessary slogans--including all of those associated with the struggle for workers power--as they become applicable in the current situation. It is difficult for me to understand how you could have interpreted the two paragraphs in that sense.

Yet you say: "We are on the contrary of the opinion that the struggle for setting up, generalizing and centralizing workers councils is today the main task in Portugal and that there are no general political solutions outside such moves, culminating in the seizure of power by these councils."

It appears to me that you are reading something into the two paragraphs that is simply not there. Perhaps the matter can be cleared up with further analysis of the demagogic politics of the leaders of the Armed Forces Movement.

Fraternally yours,
s/Joseph Hansen

P.S. I gather from what you say that you would prefer to see signatures on the articles in the News Analysis section of IP so as to eliminate the possibility of some readers thinking they were written in Brussels, Paris, or Rome and not by the staff in New York. But the origin of all the material in IP is generally quite clear, inasmuch as items from places other than New York are datelined or are signed. In accordance with this practice, we have never signed the editorial notes that appear in every issue giving the source of material or commenting on it. You have never objected to this routine.

Statement of the IMT Enlarged Bureau on the Results of the
Conference of the IT and the Plenum of the SWP National Committee

The IMT Enlarged Bureau has followed the discussion inside the IT on its perspectives toward the SWP. It notes that the position adopted by the majority of the April 5-6 conference of the IT is in agreement with the position expressed in the IMT/EB letter of March 19, 1975, of working to influence the SWP, which it sees as the organization of revolutionary Marxists in the United States, toward the political positions of the IMT, on a long term basis, through an internal debate within the framework of the present stage of building the Fourth International, and on the basis of respecting the present statutes of the SWP. This project required that the IT clarify its platform to include a self-definition of the IT as a faction of the SWP. Thus, the IMT/EB [IMT/Expanded Bureau] approves the formation of the IT/new faction and urges all comrades of the IT who agree with the perspective of the new faction vis-v-vis the SWP to join it. The IMT will maintain tendency relations only with the IT/new faction.

At the same time, the IMT will continue to defend the right of all comrades of the IT who were unjustly expelled from the SWP, who wish to build the SWP, and who accept its discipline to be reintegrated forthwith into the SWP. As long as these comrades follow the recommendations of the IEC in collaboration with the SWP, we will continue to consider that they would be members of the F.I. if they were not barred from this by reactionary legislation.

The IMT notes that the IT continued to offer its collaboration to the SWP's work after the Plenum of the IEC. The recent plenum of the SWP however did not fully meet the expectations of the IMT that the SWP leadership would act swiftly to eliminate all organizational obstacles to a deescalation of factional tensions in the Fourth International. The IMT wishes to reaffirm its condemnation of the collective expulsion of the IT without a trial on the alleged basis that it had formed a "rival party." Because this expulsion was a breach of Leninist norms of democratic centralism, the IMT considers that the IT must be reintegrated collectively and at once. The IMT regrets the SWP leadership failed to meet and discuss collaborative projects as well as developments inside the IT with the IT leadership until this month; that it denied the IT leadership the possibility of attending the SWP NC Plenum to make a report. The SWP leadership's claim that it could not rule on the collective reintegration of comrades of the IT because it lacked information on their current status does not hold. The IMT strongly hopes that the decision of the plenum to refer the application of comrades of the IT for reintegration into the SWP to the party local branches will mean a speedy reintegration of the whole IT/new faction, with which it is in political solidarity, and of all other comrades of the IT who are willing to accept SWP discipline and build the SWP. The resolution of this question before the SWP convention in August 1975 is a pre-condition for a lessening of tensions inside our world movement.

May 31, 1975

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Chicago, Illinois
April 29, 1975

United Secretariat
Fourth International
Brussels, Belgium
c/o Aubin

Dear Comrades,

I respectfully request that you approve my resignation from what would be an equivalent position to that of an alternate member of the IEC (since reactionary legislation prevents U.S. citizens from holding membership in the Fourth International). My reasons are of a personal nature and are not due to any change of political outlook.

With comradely greetings,
x/ Bill Massey

cc: file

Dear Comrade Hansen,

Our Political Bureau has discussed your January 2, 1975, statement and assigned me to reply to it.

The Political Bureau of the OCI considers this statement concerning our proposal to discuss our differences to be a positive one. By accurately reporting the facts about the relations between the SWP and the OCI and the proposals of the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International to the United Secretariat, it blocks maneuvers aimed at hindering the development of the discussion. In addition, it is correct in its political estimate of our objectives and motives.

Indeed, as we have written -- and as we reiterated at the time of the October 15 interview -- the basis of our intervention is that among those who claim adherence to the Fourth International, the problems have now reached maturity and can be settled.

In other words, we are convinced, as the Organizing Committee's letter of May 28, 1973, states, that "for the first time since 1952-53, the current discussion, which encompasses all the major issues of principle, strategy and tactics, presents the possibility of resuming, on a new basis and with considerably enriched international experience, the debate that led to the split in the Fourth International, founded in 1938 and reconstituted in 1943-46."

That is why, for our part, we place no preliminary conditions on the discussion, leaving the United Secretariat free to decide on the agenda. We are aware that regardless of the starting point, the discussion will inevitably end up on the principled issues raised in the 1950-53 crisis, which have not yet been resolved.

Our goal is the reconstruction of the Fourth International on the basis of the principles of the program of the Fourth International, as we explained in our letter of October 10, 1973.

We repeated our proposals again in the letter adopted in December 1974 by the Organizing Committee's International Bureau, which we asked you to pass on to the United Secretariat: "The entire experience accumulated in the class struggle has confirmed the soundness of the basis on which the Fourth International was founded. But, far from converting references to the transitional program and its method into a formality, this fact makes its defense crucially important. Only on the basis of its principles can we find a solution for the long, deep crisis the Fourth International has undergone. . . . In addition, the International Bureau declares that, whatever agenda you decide on for the preparatory discussion for your next Congress, we are prepared to participate in it."

In the same letter, the International Bureau stated that it was taking up Politica Obrera's proposal for a joint international campaign by the organizations affiliated to the United Secretariat and those of the Organizing Committee against anti-working-class terrorism in Argentina.

We regard it as a favorable development for the international discussion and for the interests of the Fourth International that the SWP, taking its stand from the point of view of "the development of all the organizations claiming adherence to Trotskyism," has publicly taken the responsibility of describing the OCI's proposals as opening the door to a "fruitful dialogue."

If we understand you correctly, an obstacle lies in the fact that some of our former characterizations of members of the United Secretariat, particularly of leaders of the French section, were "excessive." It goes without saying that the evaluations we make or were able to make of currents or of political leaders claiming adherence to the Fourth International are themselves part of the discussion and can be put in question.

But you are concerned that such evaluations may still be "echoed" in our press, and that in this event, you say, "it would be hard to avoid concluding that the OCI is engaging in a short-term maneuver rather than moving toward a basic discussion with an open mind." As an example, you cite an article which appeared in Informations Ouvrieres for November 14, 1974, in which a member of the United Secretariat was described as a "sycophant" and accused of having written "perfidiously" concerning the Hungarian revolution.

In your statement, you indicate that we are "serious revolutionists." You will admit that one aspect of this characterization is not to bring forward the personal side or to consider the positions previously held by anyone on either side to be an indelible brand.

Polemics have always been a natural form of expression in discussions between organizations and militants claiming adherence to Marxism. And in polemics, epithets are often harsh. "Sycophant" would have been a mild designation from Lenin's pen when he was polemicizing against Trotsky at the time of the August bloc.

But epithets are not essential, and for our part we are prepared to make all the accommodations in form, if they will permit a discussion to take place, which, as you say, must be "basic."

We shall take two examples to illustrate our position. We have expressed clearly our opinion of the significance of the Tenth World Congress resolution on "armed struggle": we have defined it as contrary to the Marxist principles of the Fourth International. And when we see that Ernest Mandel, who approves this orientation, declares at the same time in a debate with the right-wing Social Democrat Mansholt, "We do not advocate

violence or terrorism," is it not difficult to consider his behavior to be that of a responsible leader?

Another example: The French student syndicalist organization, UNEF, has been divided since 1971. The Stalinist fraction provoked a split because they could not tolerate a tendency led by OCI militants to gain recognition as a majority and to struggle to reconstruct the UNEF as a trade-union organization, after it had been severely damaged by leftist elements.

This year UNEF decided to participate in some university elections. It was clear that this signified a test of political strength between us and the Stalinists. Furthermore, the PCF apparatus understood it as such. We consider it a political victory that the slates of the tendency we supported gained a vote that stood at 75 percent of what the Stalinists obtained (31,000 votes for the slates we supported, 48,000 for those supported by the PCF).

One may certainly disagree about the advisability of running in such elections, or even about the need for a student union. But when the LCR's organ Rouge, which in earlier years simply ignored these elections (when the slates led by the CP and the traditional conservative slates were the only ones), advises a "boycott" and justifies it by the fact that the Stalinists and our comrades are nothing but bureaucratic manipulators, we are compelled to state that (aside from the epithets applied to us) this political identification of us with the Stalinists is a service rendered to the latter.

To come to the article you quote, we readily grant that the epithet of sycophant applied to Ernest Germain adds nothing to it. But eliminating it does not take away much. The designation "perfidiously" is applied to a statement that Imre Nagy yielded "without discrimination" to the pressure of the revolution. And what follows the quoted passage shows it clearly: it is the Stalinist version used by the bureaucracy to try to justify the second intervention, that of being "outflanked from the right."

The heart of the matter is that in that December 1956 article, Ernest Germain contrasts the "spasmodic" development of the political revolution in Hungary with the "Polish victory;" Gomulka's damning of the political revolution in Poland is considered a victory, while the dangers of an "elementary, spontaneous explosion" are denounced.

Furthermore, it would be unfair to bear down on Germain alone for this. It was the basic position of the International Secretariat of Germain, but also that of Pablo, of Frank, of Maitan, which was affirmed in particular in their position with respect to the workers insurrection in East Berlin in June 1953, a position fought by the International Committee that was formed following your National Committee's open letter.

Thus we cannot consider that the balance sheet of Ernest Germain on the question of the political revolution is unambiguous.

But that is not the main point. The essential thing is that, in our opinion, these positions of "eighteen years ago" remain current, because they are at the root of the current orientation of the majority tendency. When the Belgian section's organ, La Gauche, writes that the Portuguese Communist party has "one foot in reformism and the other in the revolutionary struggle," the same method, contrary to the basic heritage of Trotskyism, lies at the bottom.

In addition, what would show that the OCI is not engaged in some short-term maneuver is that if that were so we would conceal the fact that, in our opinion, there are within the United Secretariat and its organizations currents that place in question the programmatic basis of Trotskyism, as I personally stated at the October 15 interview. Having said this, it goes without saying that we are prepared to modify the form, especially in our public statements, if that would allow the discussion to open.

Dear Comrade Hansen, now I would like in conclusion to come to what is central to me and to the whole OCI leadership. I have just referred to Portugal. The proletarian revolution is developing in Portugal and is on the agenda throughout Europe. In an international context, the Portuguese revolution occupies a place similar to that held by the Spanish revolution and the revolutionary rising in France in 1936. At that time our international movement under Trotsky's leadership, in spite of its difficulties, differences and splits at the national level, acted like an international political unit and was ready for action.

Today, because the differences relate to the most vital issues of the proletarian revolution itself, the Fourth International cannot assert itself politically as a coherent force. That is why, to give only one example, the Portuguese LCI declares in its electoral manifesto that it is necessary "to bar capitalist reaction from all the roads (even electoral) to control of the state apparatus." Which means that the state apparatus in existence today is "neutral," that the task is not that of proletarian revolution, of the destruction of the bourgeois state. Where are the principles on which our movement rests?

That is why we are so insistent on opening this frank, deep international discussion and why we place no formal condition on how it begins. Only through this discussion will the Fourth International be able to function on the basis of democratic centralism and within the framework of the principles of the transitional program.

Let me add that we believe that the concrete historical development of the Fourth International has created a situation in which organizations like the SWP and the OCI have special responsibilities.

That is why, in reiterating the proposal made by the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth Interna-

Lambert/5

tional in its December 27 letter, that of participating in the preparatory discussion for your next international congress, I appeal to you on behalf of the OCI leadership -- we believe that organizing a real exchange of views between the leadership of the SWP and that of the OCI would represent an extremely important, positive step.

For my part, I am prepared to travel to the United States this summer, preferably during the month of August, to conduct such a responsible discussion around an agenda which we can draw up together, in whatever form and circumstances you believe to be best.

With fraternal greetings,
for the OCI Political Bureau
P. Lambert

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14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
June 5, 1975

Dear Comrade Lambert,

Thank you for your letter again outlining your position regarding a discussion of the balance sheet to be drawn on the internal differences in the world Trotskyist movement going back several decades. For the moment I will not take up the points you raise in your letter save for two items.

One is the importance of a comradely, open-minded attitude, particularly in public polemics. It is true that revolutionary-Marxists are characteristically not given to restraint in debating differences. However, this is rarely justified inside the movement, in my opinion. And certainly it is out of place if there is anarrowing of political differences, however deep the differences may be on other levels.

The other item is your reference to Comrade Mandel's denial to Mansholt that he "advocates" terrorism. Comrade Mandel made a similar denial at greater length in his reply to Newsweek, which was published in the October 9, 1972, issue of Intercontinental Press. His current statement should be weighed in that context.

In the final part of your letter, you indicate your readiness to visit the United States this summer to discuss a possible agenda and the forms and conditions of a responsible discussion. The leadership of the Socialist Workers party would be opposed to taking up such a question unilaterally. A thoroughgoing discussion such as you envisage would necessarily involve the United Secretariat and would have to be taken up there.

If you plan, despite this, to visit the United States in August, you and any other comrades of the Comité d'Organisation would be welcome to attend as observers at the open sessions of the convention of the SWP, which is scheduled for that month. In case you are interested, I would be glad to send you the necessary details.

Fraternally yours,
s/Joseph Hansen

cc: United Secretariat

Report on National Conference of the
International Marxist Group

by Johnson

At the March 1975 National Conference of the IMG, two main tendencies appeared within the supporters of the IMT. There also were three smaller tendencies or groupings. Tendency A was led by Howard and Petersen. Tendency B was led by Alan Jones and was supported by the majority of the outgoing national committee.

The political differences between the two major IMT tendencies never became clarified. They revolved around (1) the question of the united front and its application in the women's liberation movement, the Irish solidarity movement and the anti-EEC campaign; (2) how the working class will radicalize; and (3) what the IMG's attitude toward the Labour party should be. Unfortunately, the differences tended to be expressed around speculations about the future. For example, when organs of dual power emerge will the working class still have illusions in the labor party or will the working class have to lose its illusions in order for dual power organs to arise? There were differences on current perspectives, but they were presented so abstractly that it was difficult to understand what the differences mean for the activity of the IMG.

Tendency A did appear to have a more sectarian attitude toward united front work saying that the united front should be based on our full program. Tendency B said that we should participate in united front actions even if the central demand is not what we proposed; but, within the united front we should fight for our program.

The similarities between Tendency A and B were more clear than their differences. Both tendencies maintain that their perspectives are within the framework of the European resolution and its orientation to the "revolutionary vanguard." Both claim to be correctly applying that resolution to Britain.

The Tendency, which was allowed to retain its name rather than choose a letter, presented its positions very concretely around the women's liberation movement, Irish solidarity work, trade union work and the Labour party. They focused on the way in which the IMG could participate in action on these questions to build these campaigns and the IMG. The comrades contributing to the discussion were able to base their contributions more directly on the experiences of the IMG's activity and point to concrete openings to build the party. Their contributions were listened to more carefully than at previous conferences.

The resolution presented by Tendency B (Jones) was adopted with about 57 percent of the delegates voting for it. Tendency A's (Howard-Petersen) resolution received the support of about 34 percent of the delegates, and the Tendency's resolution

received the support of about 5 percent of the delegates. The remaining delegates were spread among other tendencies and groupings. The line adopted is fundamentally the same as at the last conference. It was expressed in the resolution this year as ". . .the definition of the strategic line of the IMG as preparing the working class to ensure the appearance of organs of dual power in such a qualitative confrontation between the classes. The chief instrument in fighting for such a line is the struggle to create united fronts of the organizations of the working class around crucial aspects of our transitional programme."

In the course of the preconference discussion, organizational tensions between Tendencies A and B became very heated. Charges were made against the Jones leadership by Tendency A that it was misusing its leadership, that there had been bureaucratic expulsions and that it was excluding other tendencies from leadership responsibility. Shortly before the conference the atmosphere became so tense that it became necessary to create a parity committee. In many comrades' opinion it was the existence of this parity committee that allowed the conference to take place.

At the conference the Tendency B leadership attempted to respond to these charges. They agreed there had been a propensity to reserve day-to-day leadership to one tendency; to reject ideas because they were proposed by people in a tendency in opposition to the leadership; and that discussion was frequently based on demogogy and distortion.

They proposed from now on all political tendencies should be included at all levels of the leadership -- national committee, political committee, national work commissions and local leadership. This is a reversal of previous practice. For example, while the IMG had generally included all tendencies on the national committee, at the same time the day-to-day leadership (the political committee and national work commissions) has generally been composed only of the majority. Now for the first time in several years the Tendency has been included in the political committee and bodies such as the national women's commission and Irish commission.

The Tendency B leadership has also recognized that at least on some questions neither the position of the IMG nor the differences among tendencies are clear. They have proposed a literary discussion on some of these questions.

As an example, I understand that the April National Committee meeting adopted a unanimous resolution to participate in and build a June 21 abortion demonstration. The NC decided to participate in the united front which is being built to organize the demonstration in defense of the current abortion law which is under attack by the anti-abortion forces. The NC resolution stated that as a relatively new activity, the IMG does not have a clearly worked out attitude or position toward

the abortion movement. Therefore it proposed continuing the discussion in the women's commission and the internal bulletin.

Another example is the question of the Labour party. Although not clearly formulated, much of the discussion at the conference was on the Labour party and the leadership appeared to be attempting empirically to correct some of the former errors of the IMG. The reversal of the traditional Trotskyist attitude toward the Labour party in 1970 was one of the key questions leading to the formation of the Tendency. The majority now supports fraction work in the Labour party. However, in attempting to make this shift, leaders of the Tendency think there is a danger that the majority leadership will begin to carry out this work in a major way without a thorough discussion in the membership on the aims and tasks of this work and the opponents we will confront in the Labour party. But a commission has been established where the strategy toward the Labour party and the experiences of former work in the Labour party can be discussed. All three tendencies are included on this commission. The Tendency is pushing for a thorough discussion in the IMG membership on these questions before any further steps.

May 22, 1975

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May 23, 1975

Mary-Alice Waters
New York

Dear Mary-Alice,

Sam and I had planned at one time to translate a number of documents from the GIM internal discussion on the SPD and electoral tactics, but we simply didn't have the time. The enclosed translated article is one of two on this general topic written by LTT members during the last pre-conference discussion period. The other, also by Siegfried, was a longer article taking up the question of how one determines if a party is a "bourgeois workers' party" or not. The enclosed contribution appeared in Rundbrief 17 (February 18, 1975) under the title "Was heisst kritische Wahlunterstützung und wie setzt man sie in die Praxis um?" I think it is valuable for indicating the position on electoral tactics that the LTT developed. . . .

At first the discussion had been conducted on a more or less abstract level -- on the character of the SPD abstracted from the concrete question of who to vote for. However, the Landtag elections beginning with the one in Lower Saxony in June, 1974, drove the continuing debate in a more and more concrete direction. It was at this point that differences developed within the IT and Mintoff became isolated within the IT leadership. His position called for critical support for the SPD and explicitly the use of the united front tactic vis-a-vis the SPD. In founding his "Sub-Tendency" within the IT which "supported the positions of the IT in all questions other than the question of electoral tactics regarding the SPD," Mintoff emphasized this question of applying the united front tactic to the SPD as the key difference between the "Sub-Tendency" and the IT majority. However, he also indicated in several contributions that he would favor voting for Maoist candidates as well where they ran. In this regard he never clearly defined his position. Mintoff's "Sub-Tendency" declaration is also attached.

The GIM National Conference in March of this year divided this whole debate into two separate agenda points, "The Character of the SPD" and "Electoral Tactics." In the discussion on the character of the SPD reports were made from the Compass, the IT (with Mintoff reporting) and the LTT. The IT put to a vote an older document of Mintoff's written in the early stages of the debate labeling the SPD a "bourgeois workers' party," explicitly excerpting those passages which dealt with a concrete tactical approach to the Party. This was the only document that was passed on any question during the entire conference, the vote being 85 for, 77 against, with 8 abstentions. Some LTTers voted for this motion. On the point on electoral tactics reports were given from the Compass, the IT majority, the "Sub-Tendency," and the LTT. Mintoff's "Sub-Tendency" received 16 votes from the delegates. Each delegate represented two members.

For the last Landtag election, the one in Nordrhein-Westfalia, which took place only a few weeks ago, the IT and Compass leaderships brought a common proposal into the Central Committee, raising the slogan "Elect Left-Wing Candidates," specifying the DKP Communist party and KPD, a Maoist organization. This proposal was passed in the Central Committee against only three votes -- those of Erik, Siegfried, and Mintoff. In the election campaign Compass members tended to emphasize the call to vote for the DKP while ITers tended to emphasize voting for the KPD. During the campaign about ten comrades left the GIM in two branches in Nordrhein-Westfalia, Dortmund and Aachen, representing half of the branch membership from these two groups. One of the comrades from Dortmund, an alternate member of the Central Committee, declared upon quitting that the line of the GIM election campaign would never win the ear of the working class. The reasons the other comrades had for quitting are not known to us. In Cologne three to five members of the "Sub-Tendency" refused to participate in the election campaign.

The discussion bulletin is still officially open for written contributions, but nothing has appeared since the GIM Conference. Mintoff plans to move to England this summer and it is unclear what will become of the "Sub-Tendency" remnants. The next GIM Conference is scheduled for the beginning of February 1976, with the pre-conference discussion starting in November. In the coming discussion on this subject the LIT plans to focus its contributions on the specific question of who to vote for and what the concrete content of the election campaigns of the GIM should be.

Comradely,

Derek Jeffers

What Critical Support in Elections Means and
How It Is Applied in Practice

by Siegfried Kreisler, Heidelberg

(Printed in Rundbrief 17, February 28, 1975,
Internal bulletin of the GIM)

The running of GIM candidates, which was a realizable possibility at the Landtag election in Nordrhein-Westfalia, but was frustrated by the lack of inner-organizational preparation, would have been an excellent possibility to gather experience on the question of how the organization can most effectively advocate its solutions for the present crisis-ridden situation. We would have had the possibility to acquaint thousands of people for the first time with our proposals via the mass media and the organization of an efficient campaign; to come into contact with working people who are receptive to revolutionary ideas.

However, our own candidacy will not exhaust the problem of our electoral intervention for the entire period lying ahead of us. At best we will be able to run in a few constituencies. We will thus have to take a position on what we propose for the other constituencies where we are not running -- and that will usually be the majority. Thus, the question of critical support remains.

My position, and that of a number of other comrades, is that the tactic of "critical support in elections" for the Social Democratic party can be the most effective means to get across our program to the largest possible number of working people. The debate on this has suffered for a long time for the reason that many comrades cannot really imagine how the tactic of critical support can be applied in practice. The unfortunate example of Lower Saxony did not exactly help, of course, to make the purpose and the use of this tactic more evident. How can a thorough critique of Social Democracy be reconciled with a call to vote for it? Doesn't that necessarily have to appear contradictory? Those are the questions which many comrades are asking.

With only this unfortunate example of Lower Saxony in mind it appears easier to call for a vote for grouplets like KBW and KPD¹ with the argument that they show the working class the revolutionary road; or to call for the election of the DKP² and suggest that it is a better alternative to the SPD. However, experience has shown that these tactics are no genuine alternatives. Thus, the election in Hessen did not in any way bring us a single step further, as is convincingly proved, in my opinion,

1. Kommunistischer Bund Westdeutschlands (Communist League of West Germany) and Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany), the two largest Maoist organizations.

2. Deutsche Kommunistische Partei (German Communist Party), the pro-Moscow organization.

in the article by Comrades Erik Wagner and Connie Herzinger, who drew a balance of the GIM's election interventions.²

All of these tactics bore a compromise character. It was not decided to scientifically work out a line and then put it into practice with determination. Rather, the GIM was exposed to influences and pressures from many sides.

The line which I propose in this article cannot be applied unless there is a radical break with ultraleft habits of thought. It requires a clear orientation to the working population without any consideration for the predominant opinion in the ultraleft camp. However, it offers in return the possibility to win those elements of this camp which are capable of learning to our mass-oriented Marxist politics.

I. The fundamental principle of the campaign

The fact that our organization does not itself run in elections is only an aspect of the general problem -- that we are too weak on an organizational level to offer a genuine alternative. For the broad layers of the working population we are not viewed or taken seriously as an organizational alternative to the mass party of the SPD. All that we have is our program -- our demands -- which express the real interests of the working population. Apart from that we have nothing.

The key point for us to start with is to gain a hearing for these demands, to popularize them and point out a realistic way to realize them. How do we do that under the given conditions?

Everyone knows that we are only presenting these demands, but are unable to realize them. Every worker knows at the same time that the SPD very probably could achieve these demands, but that it doesn't do it. On this point we have to hit hard.

Thus, the fundamental principle of our campaign must be: demand that the leadership act. Presupposing tactical flexibility and firm determination we can succeed twofold: a) in becoming the mouthpiece of the masses' interests, and b) in discrediting the present leadership of the working class, the Social-Democratic bureaucracy, in the eyes of the working population.

Precisely for politically conscious workers this is the only realistic perspective. We offer to try together with them to compel the leadership of the SPD to win these demands. Our campaign is a vehicle for just that. We have to offer them possibilities to become active themselves and involved in this campaign. Later on I will go into how that could look organizationally.

3. This article has not yet been completed and published in a bulletin.

Why is this the only realistic perspective? -- No matter how critical-inclined a worker may already be towards the SPD, the DKP -- without even talking about the KPD and similar sects -- does not appear to him capable of winning the demands which it presents either -- leaving aside the question of what these demands are like. We, too, cannot present these groups as an alternative -- and also we shouldn't do it! The point is not to nurture new opponents for ourselves, rather to weaken and ultimately put out of circulation the central opponent that has what we want, namely the leadership of the working class.

II. What Kinds of Activities are Necessary for That?

Although our campaign has to say clearly and loudly that we are intervening in favor of an SPD government, it has to be a completely independent campaign -- first, in the programmatic and second, in the organizational sense. It has to be clearly identifiable as a socialist campaign with socialist goals.

However, we cannot shy away from contact with the SPD; on the contrary, we have to seek and where necessary compel the leadership to tolerate appearances by candidates at election rallies, even at party meetings. Everywhere we have to connect our demands to the call for an SPD government.

If we want to get the ear of those who -- with or without enthusiasm -- vote Social Democratic, then our energetic campaign for an SPD government will have to secure us the right to criticize. We have to get ourselves in a position where we are not standing there on the sidelines as external critics who no one needs to take seriously; rather we have to present ourselves as the force which is clearly stating the various expectations which the working population has in the SPD, tying them up together as demands and confronting the party with them.

A) Which Questions?

In Landtag elections we have to consider focusing on Land-wide political questions. With specific problems we should try to make general problems clear. As a general rule of conduct we should try to give the campaign a character as locally related as possible.

In Hessen, for example, we should have by all means intervened in the dispute around the curriculum. We should have called on the SPD leadership not to give in to the pressure from the CDU and either drop the curriculum, which would have signified a step forward, or allow it to be watered down. In Frankfurt the question of real estate and apartment speculation should have played a large role in our campaign. Along with explaining the general problems we should have especially attacked here the speculation on the part of the Hessischen Landesbank in whose board-of-directors the SPD bureaucrats sit. We should have said: The workers do not elect you to enrich yourselves with their problems! At the time of the Herstatt Bank scandal there was fertile soil for demanding nationalization of the banks.

At the present time the following problems would have to be central to all our campaigns:

a) No more coalition politics! The unconditional tie to the bourgeois Free Democrats⁴ guaranties from the very beginning that workers' interests will not be able to be represented in the policies of the government. Criticism of the SPD leadership that allows the FDP to practice extortion. (The case of Friedeburg!)⁵

b) The SPD leadership must present a program against unemployment! This must include public works in the general⁶ interest (like the construction of Social Welfare apartments, schools, day care centers, expansion of public transportation). No presents of funds to the employers by any means.

c) Protection of working people against permanent inflation. That means legal guarantee of the sliding scale of wages.

Other standard demands, which have to be respectively locally or regionally concretized, must relate to the foreign workers, Paragraph 218⁷, and the limitation of basic rights for employees in public service (Berufsverbote)⁸.

B) How Should the Campaign be Organized?

At the present stage the organization is in we do not carry out election campaigns in order to win seats (even when we run ourselves), rather, a) to be able to get across the socialist program to thousands of people, and b) to build the organization, in short: to recruit!

We have to construct our campaigns organizationally in such a way that we are maximally effective in both. This can best be achieved if we make the organizational center of the campaign a committee of "Socialists for an SPD Government." This committee would essentially consist of us as well as our sympathizers and supporters. This committee has to be a vehicle to win dozens, when possible hundreds of supporters for the campaign. A special campaign newspaper has to be published in which the goals and activities of the committee are represented. There should be reports on the progress of the campaign, on the confrontations and fights with the SPD leaders; what the SPD candidates said at meetings and rallies, how they reacted to our intervention, should be carefully described.

4. Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP -- Free Democratic Party)
5. Former SPD Minister of Culture in Hessen, who was dropped by the SPD after the FDP sharply attacked him for progressive measures he had introduced in education and demanded his ouster as the price for the formation of a government coalition.
6. Apartments rented only to certain welfare recipients, where the state subsidizes the rent.
7. The law illegalizing abortion.
8. The banning of certain individuals from public employment (usually teaching) on political grounds.

There should be reports of any restrictions on speaking or selling the newspaper. Of course this newspaper should be sold at all SPD rallies.

The committee should publish special brochures and pamphlets in which the aims and nature of the campaign are described along with a call to join the committee and/or support it financially. Good press work has to represent an important aspect of the campaign.

With a bit of skill and professionalism we can succeed in this way in coming in contact with hundreds of working people, college and high school students -- and specifically, those who are really politically progressive.

All of this results in our campaign, although it aggressively intervenes in favor of an SPD government, indeed much more aggressively than the SPD itself, being really only on the surface a campaign for the SPD. Essentially it is a campaign against the SPD leadership. The whole way in which we call for an SPD government, the expectations which we tie this up with, the way we bring the principle "class against class" to the forefront, should horrify and terrorize the Party leadership. They would rather lose every election than be driven to power by such expectations and demands.

Mannheim, January 29, 1975

Postscript:

Of course, here we have a draft based purely on thoughts. If we really want to learn to swim we have to jump into the water. Then a lot can be made more concrete. To lead a good revolutionary election campaign is an art that has to be learned through experience.