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New York, N.Y. 10014
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TO ALL NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND ORGANIZERS

Dear Comrades,

Attached for your information is the September 24, 1975, issue of the Internationalist Tendency Newsletter which contains a single article entitled, "The 1975 SWP Convention and International Questions."

It has been circulated to their members and cothinkers.

Comradely,


Jack Barnes
National Secretary

The 1975 SWP Convention and International Questions

Assessment of an observer

A total of thirty-six supporters of the IMT were able to attend the national convention of the SWP held August 18 to 22, 1975. Fourteen of them were comrades who had been expelled from the SWP in July, 1974; they were allowed to attend as observers only. Nine were members of the SWP. And thirteen were fraternal delegates or observers from organizations of the Fourth International.

This report is written by an observer. As such, he was only able to read the preconvention bulletins at the convention itself. The report will deal exclusively with the international questions discussed at the convention. The issues raised in the reports and discussion on the class struggle in the United States will not be dealt with here. A further report dealing with these questions may be written at a later date.

The convention was marked by a deepening of the SWP majority's incorrect positions in the international discussion. We say SWP majority advisedly since it is unclear where the LTF as such stands on the questions involved. The relationship between the workers fight for bourgeois democratic rights and their fight against bourgeois rule was the main underlying issue of the debate on Portugal. It is a debate over the essence of the method of the Transitional Program.

The same issue is at the heart of the debate over the Argentine PST's political line. Since Juan Peron's attack on the Peronist left in June 1974, the defense of the democratic rights of the working class against governmental repression and fascist attacks has been a central concern of Argentine revolutionaries. The PST policy on this key question has included a series of multi-sectoral meetings with bourgeois parties-- especially the Union Civica Radical-- in which the PST declared that it shared with the other parties present a fundamental commitment to defend democratic rights.

This incipient programmatic bloc was reflected in portraying the UCR's defense of democratic rights as flowing from the same basis as the PST's; in support for the deceitful slogan of "institutionalization"; and in blaming the "militarization of political life" on the extremists of the left and right rather than on the exacerbation of class contradictions. The PST's defense of the continuity of the Peronist government was motivated by the fact that it was democratically elected by the working class. This formula is wrong in principle and increasingly at odds with reality. In fact, the Montoneros' break with Peron's government, Campora's formation of the Authentic Party, the strike of Villa Constitucion and the recent general strike showed massive rejection of the government. Thus the PST's policy had a confusing and disarming effect.

The IEC meeting of January 1975 had discussed and condemned the PST's policy. The LTF however replied with a document which included dangerous theoretical revisions, "In reply to the IMT's letter no. 2." Although Argentina was not discussed at the SWP convention, the theoretical justifications used to defend the PST's policy were applied to the SWP's position on Portugal.

A similar issue is also at the heart of the discussion on the orientation of the SWP in the United States today. The SWP leadership continues to use the theory of the combined nature of the American revolution in order to counterpose democratic demands and transitional ones. Campaigns around democratic demands are given priority to campaigns around transitional ones, not on the basis of a specific analysis of the situation, but as a result of the combined revolution and sectoralist schemas.

Another area where the SWP majority seems to have regressed is in its analysis of Stalinism and of the revolutions in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, and Cuba. The fact that the proletarian revolution has scored momentous successes in Indochina, without the SWP leadership feeling compelled to readjust its evaluation of the Paris Peace Accords, of the nature of the VCP and NLF, or to recognize the proletarian class character of the new states, is a reflection of hardening dogmatism and Stalinophobia.

This same dogmatism was reflected in a class series by cde. Feldman. In these classes, Feldman was compelled to distinguish 6 different uses of the formula "workers and farmers government" and about 5 different options for most of these 6 uses, in order to uphold the correctness of the original analyses the SWP made in Eastern Europe, China, and Cuba. Despite these byzantine efforts, some questions were asked about dual power and about Vietnam.

Feldman answered that dual power had nothing to do with the Chinese, Yugoslav, Cuban, and Vietnamese revolutions. He substituted a complicated formula of "governmental power" as a substitute for dual power in these cases. This power enables "petty-bourgeois" forces (such as the CCP, the LYC, the VCP, or the July 26 Movement) to peacefully transform the new bourgeois state they have formed, into a workers state, on condition that a previous mobilization or catastrophe has weakened the old bourgeois state. This question of Stalinism and the workers state is an important one. But the debate must include both a non-factional general theoretical clarification, and a thorough political discussion on the concrete revolutionary events in Indochina.

Alongside these and other deviations, it must be noted that the SWP leadership shied away from the full logic of

some of the formulations which have appeared in the press and in various discussions. For example, Cdes. Waters and Barnes had to intervene several times against those who accepted the image of the white male section of the working class as "Archie Bunkers" and as a labor aristocracy which would have to be bypassed. Thus, formally the SWP insists that democratic slogans dealing with the special oppression of minorities and women be associated with slogans corresponding to the immediate interests of the working class as a whole, and with transitional slogans. The issue will be resolved in practice and in the selection of priority campaigns month by month. The fact that the turn to the working class is being implemented through the formation of trade-union fractions will be an important factor in the outcome.

Furthermore, the SWP leadership's incorrect approach to bourgeois democracy continues to coexist with a whole series of orthodox warnings and practical experiences which still obstruct a full systematization of the error.

Sheppard on Portugal

The reports and discussion on Portugal were the high point of the convention. All present were deeply conscious of the meaning of the Portuguese events as the early skirmishes of a class war that will sweep across Southern Europe and the rest of the continent. The unprecedented proportional size of the vote received by the workers parties in that country showed that the Portuguese masses overwhelmingly, instantaneously, and almost instinctively, rallied to the cause of socialism. It is now a fact of life that will not easily be reversed. It is also cause for the deepest revolutionary optimism. Thus, although the discussion had to deal with the reality of possible setbacks, it was dominated by the obvious fact that the moment of truth for the Fourth International is approaching in Europe.

Cde. Barry Sheppard delivered the SWP majority position. His speech was followed by a counter-report given by Cde. Alan Jones, representing the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, and interventions by representatives of the Liga Comunista Internacionalista, Portuguese sympathizing organization of the F. L. (LCI), and the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT). There were also contributions from Dick Fidler, Gus Horowitz, and Gerry Foley, who drew from their eyewitnessing of the events.

The SWP majority report was characterized by a mistaken analysis of the political currents in Portugal and their relationship to the various layers of the working class, petty-bourgeoisie, and bourgeoisie. Its analysis of the CP was distorted by attempts to fit it into an archetypal model of counter-revolutionary Stalinism. Finally, it put forward an incorrect analysis of the relationship between the development of organs of workers power and defense of bourgeois democracy.

The SWP leadership explained the situation as follows. There was a continuity between the ruling personnel under the military dictatorship of Salazar-Caetano and the military dictatorship of the MFA which was instituted by the April 24, 1974, coup. The MFA is a tool of the big bourgeoisie, but due to the powerful upsurge of the working-class, it has been forced to adopt a populist demagoguery, and to rely on the CP's control of the mass movement, in order to stop a free development of the working-class radicalization.

The CP, because of its usual counter-revolutionary class-collaborationist project agreed to support the MFA, to break strikes, and to straightjacket the workers through the bureaucratic structure of the Intersindical. As a result, the SWP leadership says the workers turned away from the CP in disgust. They looked to the SP as a looser formation better able to express their aspirations.

This undisciplined potential of the SP at a time when the battle for production was on the bourgeoisie's agenda in turn led to greater repression of the SP by the MFA and greater reliance on the CP's bureaucratic control of the mass movement (exclusion of the SP from the May Day rally, underrepresentation in the newly reconstituted municipal councils, denial of the promised new trade-union elections, suppression of República, limitations of the Constituent Assembly's powers).

In this view, the SP's break with the Goncalves government is a break with the MFA and the bourgeoisie, however partial and hesitant it may be, and a break carried out under the pressure of the masses. What is more, the SP mobilizations focused on what the SWP leadership considers to be the key issue around which the masses can be broken from the bourgeoisie, i. e. defense of democratic rights and institutions. They should therefore have been supported even while criticizing the SP leadership's illusions in the MFA and its links with the PPD.

The SWP leadership posed a united front in defense of democratic rights as the means of mobilizing the masses against the bourgeois government and forming them into committees of action around this issue. This, they contended, would eventually open the possibility of real soviets emerging, as opposed to the front groups of the ultra-lefts which presently exist.

However, reality was already shattering the credibility of this nicely worked out schema at the time of the convention. Cde. Sheppard had to explain what was undeniably the rise of a massive reactionary movement in the midst of these SP demonstrations. Initially, some SWP majority comrades had portrayed these right-wing attacks on the CP as progressive anti-Stalinist mass actions. Later, their reactionary character was recognized, but they were presented as separate from and of less import

than the SP actions. In the latest issue of the *Militant*, the main emphasis is on blaming the CP for the SP's right turn and for the confusion of the militant fighters for democratic rights. Since the alleged pro-SP vanguard is now seen as confused and demoralized, and since the real vanguard operating in the workers commissions was always dismissed as unimportant, the projections are rather pessimistic.

At the time of the convention, the party majority still presented the bourgeoisie's strategy as being aimed at transforming the hidden military dictatorship into an open military dictatorship. Carvalho or Goncalves were supposed to be the instruments of that plan. The plan for the establishment of people's assemblies was a ploy by the MFA to further curtail the rights of the SP and the working class. The CP, because of its class-collaborationist anti-democratic nature, was naturally backing this move toward an open military dictatorship, with the help of the ultra-left.

In such a view, the central obstacle to this plan of the bourgeoisie was the attachment of the masses to their newly-won democratic rights and institutions, above all the Constituent Assembly. Defense of the Constituent Assembly should therefore be the central theme of mobilizations, and the basis of a united front. However, the SWP majority speakers insisted that this demand should be coupled with an unambiguous governmental formula: "All Power to the Constituent Assembly! For an SP-CP government!"

Bourgeois Democracy

Cde. Sheppard made a major point of clarifying the SWP's stand on bourgeois democratic rights and institutions. This deserves some comment here. In the first instance, he said we should always defend the democratic rights of all parties, not just those of the working class. In a workers' state the bourgeoisie would have party rights. To say otherwise is to give the bourgeois state the opportunity to deny the working class its democratic rights on the grounds that it doesn't accept the rules of the game. For this reason, we should defend not only the SP's Republica, but also the Catholic Church's Radio Renascenca. The only exception to this policy is when the bourgeoisie itself breaks the principle of majority rule by taking up arms against a democratically established workers' government, i. e. in a situation of civil war. This was not the case in Portugal, though.

The argument overlooks the fact that even when the bourgeoisie is not taking up arms against majority rule, there is no fairness or equality in the bourgeois democratic process as long as the bourgeoisie still owns the means of production and wields all the privileges associated with centuries of social pre-eminence. In order to construct the instruments of its own struggle and weaken the bourgeoisie, the working class may need not just the democratic right to organize itself, but also the "undemocratic right" (from the

point of view of bourgeois democracy) right to strip the political organs of the bourgeoisie of some of their prerogatives and material endowments. These material endowments could be a radio station, or -- why not -- the mimeograph machine which a campus administration formerly used to express its opinion, by issuing regular bulletins denouncing the actions of a student strike. This concept was a positive aspect of the "red university strategy" which the SWP used to support.

Whether or not the occupation of Radio Renascenca is such a case, is a tactical question. In fact, in all instances, respect of bourgeois democracy is not a principle which would flow from an abstract and historical commitment of the working class to defend and "qualitatively extend" bourgeois democracy, but rather, a tactical question which must be assessed in the concrete on the basis of the development of the class struggle.

The pledge to respect the democratic rights of the bourgeoisie used to be a defensive formulation, a mere maneuver to expose the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie in the capitalist courts. Now it is becoming a guiding principle of the SWP.

The Fourth International called for the election of a Constituent Assembly in Portugal during 1974. This call was based on a series of concrete factors which made it a revolutionary democratic demand: the unpreparedness of the bourgeoisie and its parties, the fact that the SP had not yet taken its sharp right turn, the need to pose a centralizing theme and to concretize the concept of a workers government. The concrete circumstances following the defeat of the March 11 coup and the elections of April 25 have given the same demand a different function in this period.

But the SWP leadership still clings on to the new formulation of the same demand (i. e. "All Power to the Constituent Assembly") because it has decided that defense of bourgeois democratic institutions is a principled question, and not a tactical one. Revolutionaries should always and everywhere consistently defend bourgeois democratic institutions, they say, because in this epoch of imperialist decay, the bourgeoisie must attack its own democratic institutions. These institutions are "forms" which will survive with a different content under the workers state.

What is involved here is the confusion of an epochal trend, similar to the trend toward the "strong state," with the policy of the bourgeoisie at any given moment. There are many situations in which the bourgeois will promote bourgeois democratic institutions in order to establish its rule more firmly, especially when it is threatened by proletarian revolution. The bourgeoisie knows well that in such situations, time is of the essence. The proletariat cannot afford to wait for the ideal moment when the bour-

geoisie will abandon its democratic pretense, before it proceeds to denounce the hypocrisy of bourgeois democracy and to build its own organs of workers democracy.

In each concrete situation, the revolutionary leadership must analyze which tactic the bourgeoisie will use. Historical generalizations will not substitute for this method. The bourgeois democratic institution of the Constituent Assembly can be just as dangerous under some circumstances as the bourgeois "undemocratic" institution of the Kornilov coup in other circumstances.

It is clear that the Kornilov coup tactic was at a completely different stage of its usefulness to the bourgeoisie in the summer of '75 in Portugal than it was in the summer of 1917 in Russia. In the case of Portugal, the Kornilov coup tactic had already been used on March 11, with Spínola's ill-fated rebellion, and its result was to strengthen the vanguard and its ties with the masses. On the other hand, there existed powerful illusions among the masses in an already elected Constituent Assembly in which a majority already favored a halt to the spread of the workers councils initiated by the vanguard.

Furthermore, even in the original Kornilov and Kerensky case, the revolutionaries were not in fact defending bourgeois democratic institutions in general. Rather, they were defending a specific relationship of forces between the bourgeoisie and working class in which the working class was able to build its own institutions (unions, parties, and councils) alongside the institutions of the working class under bourgeois democracy, i. e. the bourgeois democratic rights of the working class that was being defended against Kornilov.

The SWP leadership's defense of bourgeois democratic institutions is not solely based on the overly general reference to the epochal erosion of democracy by the bourgeoisie. It also uses a terminological trick by which defense of democratic rights which is a constant concern of the working class slides over into defense of democracy in the abstract, and even of the bourgeois democratic institutions through which democratic rights are administered. To add to the confusion, individual and human rights are thrown in for good measure. Bourgeois democratic institutions are simply the codification, or formalization, or institutionalization, of these rights which revolutionaries have always championed. Examples of such institutions presented to the convention included universal suffrage and parliament, national independence, the equal rights amendment for women, and the 1964 Civil Rights bill.

Trotsky's method in dealing with abstractions such as democracy consisted of rejecting the abstraction as a hoax and a cover for concrete bourgeois maneuvers and of counterposing a focus on concrete rights of the working class. By contrast, the line presented at the convention would lead one to automatically accept pledges to strengthen the

authority of bourgeois democratic institutions as objectively serving the interests of the working class. It would lead one to accept such pledges as the basis for joint campaigns with bourgeois forces.

This line, in fact, was precisely the justification for supporting the PST's policy of holding joint meetings with bourgeois forces at the end of which a joint news release would certify that all those present were similarly committed to defending democratic rights and their institutionalization in Argentina. This line could only confuse the workers on the fact that the Union Civica Radical intended to use institutionalization to lull the workers into passivity and reliance on the bourgeoisie while the PST intended to use democratic rights to further the struggle of the workers.

Similarly in Portugal, the call for "popular sovereignty" and "majority rule" is the abstraction under the cover of which the bourgeoisie seeks to isolate the vanguard and smash the workers commissions. To accept such a slogan is to whitewash the intentions of the bourgeoisie and its lackeys.

Returning to Cde. Sheppard, he concluded his speech by accusing the F. I. of adapting to the ultra-left's prejudices against bourgeois democracy, thereby aiding the CP-backed military onslaught against democracy

"Anarcho-populism" key issue

Cde. Jones began by saluting the SWP convention as a victory convention. The liberation of South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, was a victory of the SWP, he said. The audience responded with strong applause. This was the only time Indochina was mentioned from the podium during the whole convention.

Cde. Jones spent a whole section of his speech eliminating a series of red herrings and positions falsely attributed to the F. I. which taken together amounted to the creation of an imaginary line. He warned strongly against loose talk that the SWP and FI would find themselves on opposite sides of the barricades in Portugal. The image implies barricades between enemy classes and that the FI has gone over to the side of the bourgeoisie. In fact, the barricades in question, those of July 18, set up by the CP, were not between enemy classes but between two opposing tendencies within the workers movement. However, the LCI had opposed these barricades set up by the CP, in the name of workers democracy and defense of the SP's right to demonstrate. Such false accusations, if continued, would poison the debate and prevent clarification of the extremely complex questions involved.

Jones further reported that the LCI and FI were opposed to the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly advocated by some ultra-left groups, that they favored the immediate withdrawal of Portuguese troops from Angola; that they

considered the MFA government, however weak, to be a bourgeois government; and that the CP's divisive policy in Portugal could be considered one of the historical crimes of Stalinism. These, however, were not the main issues.

Jones then stressed two main points on which the FI has based its assessment of the situation as a pre-revolutionary one: the weakness of the government and the radicalization of the masses expressed in the emergence of a broad vanguard and organs of workers power.

Contrary to the SWP leadership's view, the MFA did not represent a strong military government directly reflecting the interests of big business. It was a weak government, engaged in a perilous balancing act between various social forces, and incapable of carrying through the bourgeoisie's desire to blunt the edge of the workers combativity and stabilize the situation. This was the basis of its designation as a bonapartist government, although Jones personally felt that the ability of a bonapartist government to arbitrate depends on its use of a reliable and cohesive state apparatus, a factor which was prominently absent in Portugal. Further, the opposition between the SP and the MFA was superficial, as the growth of the Melo Antunes wing showed clearly.

In fact, the situation could only be understood if one looked at the development of the broad vanguard in Portugal and its relation to the masses. In Lisbon, Oporto, Setubal, and among the agricultural workers of the South, the radicalization had gone so far that factory occupations, land seizures, and soldiers committees were widespread, involving many rank-and-file SPers and CPers. Factories and offices re-opened under workers control numbered in the hundreds, forcing the government to extend nationalizations beyond its original plans. Worker militants had now taken the habit of arming themselves in emergencies to stop possible reactionary threats.

The MFA decree on the formation of Popular Assemblies was meant to bring this process under the control of the military hierarchy: the delegates of workers and neighborhood commissions were to be balanced off with appointed representatives from the army units. Even this provision, however, was by-passed in some areas where soldiers elected their representative.

As a parenthetical statement, one may point out that, according to Issac Deutscher, the original idea for the 1905 soviet in Russia had come from the tsarist commission of inquiry of Senator Shydlovsky who ordered the workers of several factories to elect representatives to voice their grievances. Further, one may add that the demonstration which triggered the February, 1917 revolution was led by Father Gapon, a tsarist agent whose mission was to form a movement which would compete with

the legitimate trade unions and bring the workers under government control.

At any rate, and with all proportions guarded in the analogy, the Portuguese and international bourgeoisie saw a further development of workers control as the main threat, and did not feel the MFA could control these popular assemblies. So shortly after the Goncalves government decreed their formation, the SP left the government and launched a campaign with a major theme being opposition to anarchy and for an authoritative broad-based government. The PPD and the Catholic Church immediately entered the campaign. The Republica and Renascenca affairs were the pretext for this joint offensive against workers control or "anarchy." At the same time, the CP turned to defend workers control as a means of keeping its influence among the vanguard workers.

The key objective for the bourgeoisie was to isolate the vanguard from the masses so as to be able to crush them separately. The frontal assaults of the military coup type had obviously been totally counter-productive since they only deepened the radicalization. The counter-revolution could only proceed under the cloak of the revolution. The Constituent Assembly was to be the legitimizing institution for a gradual purge of the vanguard from the mass movement in the name of democratic majority rule.

But the weak Portuguese bourgeoisie could not stop there and coexist peacefully with a combative mass movement that could rapidly regenerate a vanguard. Thus the attacks on the far-left would merely be the prelude for an assault on the CP first, and then the SP itself. Soares was not to be the Portuguese Pinochet, but merely to prepare the way for one by isolating the mass movement from its most effective leaders. The obvious analogy is with the social-democratic repression of the Spartakus League in 1918 and 1919 in Germany.

Jones explained that the call for a united front to reinforce, multiply, and coordinate the workers, neighborhood and soldiers commissions, was not based on the size they may or may not have already achieved, but on the objective needs of the working class in the pre-revolutionary situation of Portugal. The further the workers could go in this direction, the more difficult would it be for Soares and his MFA allies to carry out the bourgeoisie's plan, the more the workers could resist the reactionary offensive, and the easier it would be for a new offensive of the working class to march ahead.

Cde. Sheppard's admonition that these councils were worthless unless they understood the need for class independence from the bourgeois institution of the MFA sounded hollow because it did not mention the need for these councils to be also independent from the equally bour-

geois Constituent Assembly. In fact they had to be independent from all bourgeois institutions. But this was a struggle which could only be waged if the councils actually existed, a struggle which could not be separated from the struggle to develop and coordinate the first organs of this type in whatever form they appeared.

Cde. Anna of the LCI then gave the LCI greetings. She stressed the penetration of the MFA and governmental structure by the CP, described the government as bonapartist, and explained the origins of the workers commissions before the legalization of the Intersindicale, and the concrete ways in which neighborhood commissions were convoked and coordinated. The MFA had tried to re-open both Republica and Renascenca but it was stopped by the solidarity which other workers involved in workers control displayed toward those occupying the newspaper and radio station as well as by the soldiers refusal to go against this solidarity.

The demonstrations of the SP had very early taken on a rightist tone, with crowds shouting for "more Rio Maiors" -- in this town a mob burned the Lisbon daily newspapers being delivered saying they were Communist propaganda. LCI leafletters at an SP rally were beaten up by people shouting "Reds, go back to Moscow." In the same period the demonstration against the workers take-over of Radio Renascenca, when confronted by a counter-demonstration, chose to take refuge in the bishop's home. The MFA sent troops to protect their exist from his home. Further, very early three national leaders of the SP wrote an open letter to the SP opposing the rabid anti-Communist and right-wing turn of the leadership. They were immediately expelled by Soares.

Cde. Anna then outlined the growth of the LCI from 22 people in April, 1974 to several hundreds today. The LCI now has 13 headquarters. Plans were proceeding for an early merger with the PRT after a joint discussion and congress. She ended her speech by asking for solidarity from North American revolutionaries and saluting the SWP. This was received with a major round of applause.

Cde. Paolo of the PRT said there had been 15 months of a pre-revolutionary situation in Portugal, and warned not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. Alongside the MFA, he stressed there were real committees of sailors and soldiers. He conceded it could not be labeled dual power because workers power was not yet centralized. Previously, he had used the labor "atomized dual power." He said the government was Kerenskyist and could only be replaced by a workers revolution or a strong bonapartist or fascist government. His speech included a statement that democratic rights should be defended. He emphasized the need to develop embryos of workers power.

Discussion

The discussion thereafter combined attempts to refine the SWP majority's position with various outlandish accusa-

tions against the IMT. Cde. Horowitz said the SP was not moving to the right, the opposite was true; the dominant slogans of its marches were: "PS, PS, PS," "Respect the people's will, we are the majority," "Socialism, yes -- dictatorship, no." He said majority rule meant an SP-CP government, and not an SP-PPD government. Cde. Fidler said the IMT idealized soviets. Soviets could only be formed by united front committees acting on central political questions. In Portugal today this meant the defense of democratic rights.

Fidler further said that soviets in and of themselves did not mean workers power. They could be coopted and play a class-collaborationist role as had been the case in Russia during the whole first part of 1917 when the Mensheviks had a majority, and in Germany in 1919 when the Social-democrats turned them into appendices of the unions. It was not clear whether he felt that the IMT was merely underestimating the importance of the political fight within the soviets, or whether he thought soviets should not be formed unless all involved agreed on making them independent of the ruling class. This would be a sectarian, purist position which failed to recognize the inherent dynamic of workers councils in a situation of struggle.

Cde. Hansen spent some time pondering his own question: "Is cde. Jones soft on Stalinism in its ultra-left garb?" He noted that the LCI speaker had presented some democratic demands such as land reform which was a hopeful sign. But Jones had a mechanical conception that bourgeois democracy and workers democracy were polar opposites, whereas the Marxist conception was dialectical, seeing them as linked through the proletarian revolution. Cde. Frankel added that universal suffrage, national independence, and freedom of the press were forms which would be present also in workers states.

Many delegates kept on repeating the question, "If the MFA, the SP, the Church, the CIA, NATO and the Common Market all want to use a sovereign Constituent Assembly to smash the vanguard, then why have they not been able to do so? Who could resist such a formidable array of forces?" They were convinced the bourgeoisie stood for an MFA-CP alliance to smash the SP's defense of the newly won rights of the workers.

Cde. Kerry tried to explain why the IMT line given by Jones sounded so different from what the delegates had been told was the IMT line: "the IMT had changed the subject once again, but this was the last time." He thundered that Jones had dodged the key question of building the revolutionary party and dissolved it into an amorphous mass -- the Lisbon proletariat, the new substitute vanguard, the new adequate instrument. He said the debate on Portugal culminated 20 years of debate in the FI on the party and its tasks. He said that Cde. Moreno was a long-time friend, and that when they had differences

they could discuss them on a common basis; Moreno recognized errors and could progress, not the IMT; Moreno had built a party, which is more than could be said for Mandel.

World Movement Report

The debate on Portugal continued in the discussion on the world movement. Cde. Barnes began by stating that Portugal was a test through which groups could re-define and realign themselves. He warned against attempting to score petty debaters' points and against dead-end factionalism. Political clarity is essential, he said.

For the SWP leadership the IMT line on Portugal reflected a deepening of the ultra-left errors signaled by the turn of the Ninth World Congress. The central task is to build sections of the FI in every country which will prepare our cadre to vie for the majority of the soviets against the Mensheviks who would have the soviets support the Noskes. The IMT line is not Jones' attorney's brief, but the line of the European FI press, and the line in practice. On this, week after week, we had a different line, we would have called different demonstrations, and we would have been on different sides of the barricades.

The CP had a symbiotic relation with the MFA; its turn after the elections was a turn against democratic rights and therefore a right turn. The far-left fell in behind the CP, and the FI adapted to the far-left. The IMT confuses the stage of taking power with the stage of winning the masses. No revolutionary party will take power before it has won a majority of the working class; the majority has to be won over before there can even be dual power. The IMT must think the MFA is a workers government, otherwise why does it call on it to arm the MPLA? Further, why does it counterpose a non-existent SP-PPD government to a non-existent people's power when the real struggle is between a real bourgeois government and the SP mobilizations for both bourgeois and workers democracy? Ultra-leftism paves the way for fascism, he warned.

The 9th World Congress was an ultra-left turn characterized by adventurism, adaptation, and cases of opportunism; a permanent bias became built into the IMT line. We do not have the test of this line in practice in Latin America today because the IMT disintegrated there, but indirectly we can see the IMT's ultra-left line in its attacks on the PST. Now the differences are not over broad theoretical points but over how to prepare the cadre for the fight. Everyone has had to speak out publicly. No one has the right to remain silent, so there will continue to be a public debate.

A new difference is how to relate to forces moving closer to "us" on Portugal, namely the OCRFI. The Lamberists refused reunification in 1963 but now they are interested in the FI's internal debate. At our behest, they have stopped their slanderous attacks on the LCR, and agreed to submit to the outcome of the FI discussion if they are allowed to fully participate in it. Dead-end factionalism ala Healy

or Pablo is the greatest curse of the FI. Cannon said Trotsky never saw the FI as a monolith and even thought orthodox Trotskyists might be in a minority in it. This seemed to be an implicit answer to a document by Dave Keil which advocated that the SWP justify its disloyalty toward the FI on the grounds that the FI was centrist rather than on the grounds that it is or should be federalist. Cde. Barnes seemed to propose a formula whereby the SWP could continue to recognize the FI as the formal organization of world Trotskyism while characterizing its leadership as centrist and claiming freedom of action under a federalist interpretation of its statutes.

We must approach the discussion, Barnes said, with the attitude that all points of view should come out and that we can convince each other. We should try to win the OCRFI and others splitting from Healy's IC like Cde. Wohlforth who is here. We're sorry about the incident with the LCR.

Intercontinental Press was a key conquest of reunification, its concrete embodiment. Santucho used to praise it for printing his documents.

Cde. Barnes concluded with the following points:

- 1) we will make any organizational concession to achieve political clarity short of one that would jeopardize the integrity of the parties of our movement.
- 2) the debate should be approached by all in a spirit of openness and not one of factional line-ups.
- 3) we should hold out our hands to those moving towards us and at the same time build the FI.
- 4) we look forward to collaborating with comrades of new sections in particular. All we ask is revolutionary integrity and good will. We therefore instruct the incoming leadership to struggle for a democratic, Trotskyist, growing, Fourth International, and to hold out our hand to every revolutionary who wants to join us in this fight.

For the Integrity of the FI

Cde. Alan Jones again reported for the United Secretariat. He praised the tone of Barnes' report as calm and political. He pointed out that the debate on Portugal cuts across factions and tendencies. This was shown by the PST voting against Horowitz's motion on the USFI. There were different emphases and evaluation of the size of the IMT/SWP differences within the IMT. He also agreed that Portugal would be a test.

The Fourth International would emerge from the coming period qualitatively stronger or would be blown to smithereens. In Spain, the FI expected to see the LCR/ETA VI not only participate in elections, but win some of them; to count its members not in thousands but tens of thousands, and to influence millions. The LCR in France

showed the way, growing from 300 in May 1968 to 3,000 today. It is preparing to launch the first daily newspaper of the Fourth International.

Jones said he was confident that when SWP members would know about CP offices being burned, and see the SP-backed government go on the offensive, they would defend the CP and take the right side, despite the Stalinophobia which was presently obvious. Today the SP's main plank is the destruction of anarcho-populism and disorder. This made a united front with the SP unrealistic.

He explained how the Lambertist position on the united front, which is to propose a united front of the main working-class parties at all levels and at all costs, is wrong. Our approach is programmatic. That is, we do not start by saying "we must have a united front with the far-left" in the same way that the SWP says "we must have a united front of the CP and the SP." We start with working out our program on the basis of the objective situation, and then we seek a united front to advance that program. This is not a propaganda bloc, but an action united front which fights for a central need of the working class and within which we fight for our program.

Those who say we are for the united front regardless of its platform are not revolutionaries but tailists of the bureaucracy. The united front in Portugal could be based on the construction of more workers, neighborhood and soldiers committees; or on defense of the CP's headquarters. But it could not be based on the platform of the SP's current mobilizations.

The qualitative turn inside the Fourth International began not with the Republica affair, but with the SWP leadership's endorsement of the PST institutionalization line at the January IEC.

Since the 10th World Congress we have managed to respect the framework of our organizational principles. Those who teach to split on less than program are spitting in their own well, because they will face endless splits. Those who teach to unify on less than principled agreement also spit in their own well, because they will be responsible for actions they oppose. There is no world Trotskyist movement other than the FI. Trotsky taught us that an international movement is nothing without clearly defined organizational norms.

We will accept any compromise to avoid a confused debate. But the invitation to the OCI was a clear provocation which will be seen as such by everyone in the FI and will damage the LTF more than anything else. Our demand that the IT be reintegrated was never based on anything but the acceptance of the organizational integrity of the SWP. They have applied in good faith. We

will see at the next IEC if they have been reintegrated.

Our slogans are two:

- 1) defend the political positions of the FI
- 2) defend the organizational integrity of the SWP and of the FI.

In the discussion the same points were generally reiterated. Cde. Camejo boasted that the LTF split vote at the USFI showed that the LTF was principled. By contrast, the IMT had accepted the Los Angeles IT's vote despite what he alleged was the IMT's knowledge of the LA IT's complete opposition to the IMT line on Latin America. In Camejo's calculations, of course, this small change could have reversed the numerical outcome of the world congress. Cde. Weinstein said the IMT's failure to understand or communicate with the LTF had to be explained by alien class pressures.

Cde. Garza accused the IMT of challenging the party's integrity by collaborating with people inside the SWP who were discussing a split from the SWP and by not telling the SWP leadership about it. These people thought the IMT would protect them and they could stay in the SWP while carrying out a different line on Chile.

In his summary Jones answered that the IMT had opposed various projects of some sectors of the IT; that the IMT unambiguously favors the SWP as the section of the FI if there weren't the Voorhis Act. He said he opposed people disrupting the SWP and said they should be expelled. But the IT was not disrupting the SWP, this was only a potential logic. He said the IMT would break with anyone in the United States who does not build the SWP. In the same way, the SWP should respect the integrity of the FI, and not discuss with people who call our sections agents of imperialism.

Future of the LTF

Barnes did not mention the IT. His summary clarified a few points. He added that the leadership of the FI is not some body suspended in mid-air, but the sum of the leaders of the sections, some of whom are on the IEC or the USFI. The OCI should not be asked for mea-culpa's. To vote for things one doesn't agree with is a breach of Bolshevism. It is no secret that the opinion of the leadership of the SWP for some time now has been that the LTF should be dissolved. The only reason for the LTF's formation was to defend organizational norms. We think both "factions" should dissolve.

Following the SWP convention, a steering committee of the LTF was to be scheduled. There were well over two hundred guests in attendance including over 90 from Canada, 30 from Mexico, 20 from Germany, 15 from Britain, and several from other Latin American and European countries.

The SWP leadership's factional work outside the channels of the FI, as well as its intentions to "collaborate with new sections in particular" was reflected by the presence of observers from the Portuguese PRT, from groups in Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, Iran, and from the GRS, Antilles section of the FI.

The results of the LTF steering committee are not known. However, the SWP leadership seemed to favor an attempt to win over the LTF to its point of view on Portugal. This seemed quite feasible given the flexibility of Cde. Moreno; however the Portuguese PRT would have to make quite a somersault to follow suit.

It seemed that despite all the talk of crossing the class line, Cde. Barnes had decided against a course which would have the SWP declare a political split from the FI. The political basis of that decision is not clear and there are probably differences on what it should be within the SWP leadership.

One thing is clear -- the SWP leadership wishes to continue to take advantage of the privileges which being a fraternal organization prevented from affiliation with the FI affords it. The allegiance of the vast majority of world Trotskyists to the FI, as well as the respect the FI has acquired among broader layers as the only serious and functioning international body, mean that association with the FI is a pre-condition for the SWP leadership's ability to even get a hearing from these elements. Thus, the SWP leadership included at least a verbal pledge to build the FI among its goals.

On the other hand, the SWP leadership places a high premium on a rapid overthrow of the present FI leadership. Thus the LTF was assembled on the basis of a minimal platform centering on defense of internal democracy, mainly on the rights of national sections. The same rush to assemble a majority leads to premature and unilateral overtures to the OCI, and the flaunting of the norms of the world movement.

There are many contradictions inside the LTF and there will be many inside any international bloc based on gathering national Trotskyist formations, dogmatists, and the more backward sectors of our movement. Attempts to fudge over such decisive questions as the application of the united front, the role of nationalism, the analysis of Stalinism, of the broad vanguard, the relation of bourgeois democracy to proletarian revolution, and so on, cannot succeed very long in the face of a deepening revolutionary wave.

But the danger that a depreciation of the organizational norms of the FI represents should not be underestimated. These norms will become even more important as the FI grows. Nor should we underestimate the danger that these

temporary international blocs represent to the education of new layers and to the maintenance of the FI as a whole on a correct revolutionary course.

These dangers cannot be met with sudden organizational ultimatums, with a sectarian exclusionary policy toward certain forces outside the FI, or by the hope that massive new recruitment in certain more advanced parts of the world will swamp the more backward sectors. They can only be met by a clear and pedagogical fight around the organizational and political questions raised in the discussion. This is the only way of exacerbating the contradictions inside the LTF while correctly educating new layers inside the FI.

IMT Caucus

All the supporters of the IMT present at the convention were invited to a caucus which held two meetings to discuss the convention. In general these comrades felt that the SWP majority position on Portugal represented a very serious error with dangerous implications all over the world. They felt the IMT position was an extension of the European Perspectives Document, and would probably be understood and accepted naturally by comrades who had supported the IMT.

There exists a danger that a mirror-image of the SWP's incorrect position could be adopted, putting a plus where the SWP puts a minus, and vice-versa. This position would simply say that where the SWP leadership sees the Goncalves government as reactionary, it should be seen as progressive; where the CP is seen as counter-revolutionary it should be seen as quasi-revolutionary; where the SWP sees the IMT crossing the class line it is really the SWP which is, and so on. Such a method is best combatted by an analytical discussion of the issues.

While the caucus could not discuss these matters at any length, recent events in Portugal make it clear that recognizing the wrong side of the class line in one instance is not a sure guarantee of developing a wrong revolutionary policy.

At the caucus, the feeling was that a discussion should be held at the approved time and through the recognized channels to establish a position to be presented to the SWP leadership and ranks. A literary discussion is due to open in the FI, and possibly in the SWP, on this question. At the same time, comrades of the IT should proceed with their collaborative work with the SWP.

A discussion was held between Cde. Jones and the SWP leadership concerning the IEC recommendation that the IT be reintegrated. Barnes stated that the SWP would have completed the reintegration of ITers in the way that it sees fit by the time of the next IEC, which is due for January, 1976. It expected the IEC to approve the SWP's

decision and break all relations with elements outside the SWP. When comrades of the IT were reintegrated they were expected to conduct all political work through the SWP bodies and maintain no formal contact with other comrades of the IT, not yet reintegrated.

Cde. Jones stated that the IMT had already broken with all those elements who had not followed the IEC recommendation. He said the IMT would fight tooth and nail for the reintegration of all those who collaborate with the SWP, and would continue relations with them.

In this regard, it is necessary to say that the SWP

leadership has already flaunted the recommendations of the IEC. It has not acted either in the letter or spirit of those recommendations. The good faith with which members of the IEC voted for those recommendations has been made a mockery of. It is up to the international leadership to take note of this fact.

As for IMT supporters in the USA, those inside and those presently outside the SWP, they will continue to build and seek to influence the SWP despite setbacks, and despite the obstacles erected by the SWP leadership to their full participation.

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