

[to P.C. members]



Box 32139, Detroit, Mich 48232

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February 8, 1976
Detroit, Mi 48211

Socialist Workers Party
14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

Dear Comrades:

The splintering of the Trotskyist movement has affected revolutionary workers everywhere. We believe it is essential for Trotskyists to discuss the state of the Trotskyist movement.

With this in mind, we sent you last December a document titled "Rebuilding the Fourth International." The enclosed document, "Putting an End to the Crumbling of the Trotskyist Movement," is a follow-up on the same theme.

If your group is interested in a discussion on these questions, please write to us.

Comradely,

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PUTTING AN END TO THE CRUMBLING OF THE TROTSKYIST MOVEMENT

Nearly forty years after the founding of the Fourth International, the Trotskyist movement is the only one -- on an international scale -- to refer to the necessity of an independent proletarian political line and organization and to set as its goal the establishment of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, on the level of its basic programmatic formulations.

There are other currents which make more or less explicit references to proletarian revolution -- in particular the so-called "state capitalist" groups and their various offshoots. But they never structured themselves on an international scale and have in fact even abandoned the very idea. They were never able to elaborate a political line of their own. Most of them define themselves with respect to the Trotskyist movement, out of which the majority of them come.

As for the so-called "Maoist" groups, though they exist in almost every country and though they even have a notable influence in a number of under-developed countries, they represent (that is, when they represent anything at all) populist currents, the aim of which is quite openly to put the working class in the tow of bourgeois interests. When these organizations are able to develop, their explicit abandonment of the proletarian camp causes them to become organizations representing interests other than those of the proletariat.

The most important assets of the international Trotskyist movement are by far the two following facts: First, it has maintained, at least in its programmatic references, the political continuity of the revolutionary movement, successively embodied in the International Workingmen's Association of Marx and Engels, in the Second International until World War I, in the Communist International of the 1919-1923 period, and ultimately in the Left Opposition and the Fourth International founded by Leon Trotsky. Secondly it was the only movement to maintain this tradition during a difficult period, against classical reformism, against Stalinism and against the different varieties of "Third-Worldism" despite their Marxist cover.

Thanks to this maintenance of political continuity, today, after decades during which the revolutionary movement had no real influence on the working class movement, new generations can be trained and educated as proletarian revolutionaries.

However, it must be admitted that the Trotskyist movement has not been able to give itself a living, competent and efficient international leadership, recognized as such by all the forces of the Trotskyist movement.

The emergency of an International, of a world party of the revolution, recognized as a leadership by important fractions of the proletariat itself of course largely surpasses the mere problem of the will or the competence of proletarian revolutionary organizations. The emergence of an International is not dependent only upon the ability of the organizations to measure up to the tasks of the hour on the ideological and practical levels.

Nevertheless the responsibility of the organizations that make up the Trotskyist movement is great, in the sense that today there does not even exist an international leadership corresponding to the present possibilities of the movement and to its development. The inability to maintain the organizational unity of the movement and the inability to train an international leadership recognized by all the Trotskyist groups are of course two aspects of the same problem.

The scattering of the Trotskyist movement is shown by the number of rival international leaderships, each of which has a variable audience; by the existence of a great number of Trotskyist organizations belonging to none of the existing international bodies; and by the type of relationships existing within each of these international bodies, which are often formal or even fictitious relationships.

No responsible Trotskyist organization, which really wants the Trotskyist movement to play the role that it should, can accept this division, this scattering of groups which is not justified by any programmatic view.

Of course, part of the existing disagreements between Trotskyist groups rest on questions of vital importance. But it is precisely only inside a Trotskyist movement capable of doing away with sectarianism and ostracism and of allowing a large-scale confrontation of ideas, that the different analyses can be valuably discussed.

Such a confrontation, on the present situation of the Trotskyist movement, on the analysis of the causes of its scattering and on a critical balance-sheet of its evolution since Trotsky's death, appears clearly as a vital and urgent necessity.

No proclamation, address, or unilateral appeal will ever be able to solve a problem concerning the whole of the Trotskyist movement.

It is indispensable that an international framework for such a confrontation be set up. This proposition is not at all incompatible with working toward an International based on the rules of democratic centralism. On the contrary, to try and put an end to the scattered state of the Trotskyist movement is the best way to work toward the building of a democratic and centralized international organization.

Will such an organization be created around one of the existing international organizations? Will it be the fruit of a larger restructuring, and on other bases? The proposed confrontation will have to deal with these questions among others, because there are great differences of opinion as to this problem between the organizations which are members of international bodies and those which are not.

However, the starting point of this discussion must be the undeniable fact that an international organization having a political authority over the whole of the Trotskyist movement does not exist. This remains an aim which must be reached by the organizations existing today. Our task is to build a democratic centralized international organization starting with the presently scattered groups.

The democratic centralism of the international organization to be built will not be suspended in mid-air. It cannot be simply the result of correct statutes. It implies a basic agreement on the program. It also implies a mutual political trust on the part of the groups making up the international organization as well as the trust of all groups and of all their militants toward the leadership.

This trust between groups and this trust toward the leadership of the other groups do not exist at the present time. Unless one group is able to lead significant struggles of the proletariat in its own country and to prove through action that it deserves the political trust of the other groups, the sectarianism which is characteristic of the relations between Trotskyist organizations today will forever preclude the possibility of doing away with the groups' respective distrust.

The only other way to overcome this distrust is through a loyal confrontation of the points of view and through a common activity. These should be started right away in all possible fields and can be extended afterwards to encompass all the activities of the groups concerned.

In the face of the present sad situation of a scattered Trotskyist movement whose sectarianism presents the first steps toward a solution to be undertaken, the undersigned organizations have taken the initiative to address themselves to the whole of the Trotskyist movement in order to set up an international framework wherein could be discussed the ways and means of creating an international forum within which all the different trends of the Trotskyist movement could coexist.

The framework proposed by the undersigned is not to become a new international body in competition with those already existing.

Neither is it to become a mere discussion group, though it will have to play this role to the fullest, by allowing the participants to outline their points of agreement and disagreement, thus contributing to the clarification needed by the Trotskyist movement.

The undersigned are conscious that the honest confrontation of points of view is just a necessary pre-condition for the establishment of a political program for

the world revolutionar struggle of our epoch. Beyond this, the positions of each will have to undergo the test of actual political struggles. The existence of a program adopted by the whole of the movement implies the existence of an international leadership recognized as such by the movement.

The undersigned organizations consider that, along with the discussion of the important problems of the Trotskyist movement, the proposed framework must examine the political and organizational help that the various groups can give to each other.

It will be up to the participating groups to determine the degree of collaboration they wish to establish, according to their own needs and to their own political and organizational capacities.

If, beyond the actual differences, the participating organizations deeply want to work toward a closer and closer collaboration; if they feel a concern for the political and organizational problems of the other groups; if they do all they can in order that -- beyond the relationships between leaderships -- closer and closer ties be established through the exchange of militants, the circulation of discussion material, etc., then, the possibility will exist for the establishment of relationships based on trust which in the future will form one basis of an ever-growing common discipline; then, leaders accepted by all will be selected and trained.

Paris, January 21, 1976.

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