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Translation

To the United Secretariat of the Fourth International

Paris
July 30, 1976

Dear Comrades,

As members of the French section of the Fourth International, we think it is our duty to draw your attention to the following question:

1. Over the last week members of the LCR were informed by a circular of a position taken by our organization regarding the upcoming congress of the SWP. This statement was published in the name of the Political Bureau without it being specified which members of this body voted for it and without any indication of whether there were opposing positions. A copy of this circular is attached.

We do not intend here to take a position on the assessment given in the Political Bureau statement of inviting representatives from organizations outside the Fourth International to attend the SWP congress as observers, or on the attitude the leadership of the LCR has taken toward this congress. These are questions on which the individual signers of this letter will take whatever stands they consider correct in the political discussion. Our present request concerns the part of the document that stipulates: "...the Political Bureau of the French section...resolves not to send a delegation to their convention. This decision is binding on leading comrades of the organization and on all its members as well." (our emphasis)

2. The signers of this letter are directly affected by this stipulation. They are not the only ones. To our knowledge, nearly a dozen comrades had decided, before the publication of the PB circular, to attend the SWP congress. All these comrades have now been placed in a particularly difficult situation. In this connection, two facts should be considered:

First, these comrades, along with us, intended to go to the SWP congress just as observers and purely in an individual capacity, taking advantage of the public character given to this gathering. These various comrades, as well as the signers of this letter, have taken different stands in the discussions within the International. Some support the majority orientation, others belong to the LTF, and others, finally, have not taken a hard and fast position as regards the international discussion. In any case, whatever the political orientation of each of these comrades, their decisions to attend the SWP congress as individuals were motivated by a very legitimate concern to get a first-hand acquaintance with the discussion and the work of one

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of the largest organizations in political sympathy with our International. This decision as such cannot be interpreted as an expression of support for the positions the SWP maintains in the international discussion or for its recent initiatives.

Secondly, all the comrades who decided to come to the SWP congress had to make a number of personal and material arrangements in advance--get leaves from their jobs and their political assignments, arrange for transportation and for lodging in the United States, and so on. We know that some of these comrades left France before being informed of the recent decision of the PB. Others learned of it only a few days before their departure, when it was difficult to change their plans without running into all sorts of problems. Furthermore, for the comrades concerned the scope and practical implications of the ban issued by the PB are far from clearly established. What exactly is meant by "attend the SWP convention"? Does this mean that any contact with the comrades of the SWP is proscribed during the period of the congress? Are LCR members forbidden to go to Oberlin to stay in the accommodations reserved for them? Does the ban issued by the PB extend to all the public activities the SWP plans to hold outside the convention sessions as such--public forums, election rallies, cultural activities, and so on?

3. In our opinion, the foregoing observations are sufficient to indicate how absurd and arbitrary the PB's decision is. It amounts to taking reprisals against individual members of the LCR who, whatever their own political positions may be, cannot be held responsible for the political moves made by the SWP leadership. It results in inflicting material losses on the LCR members concerned and in an inadmissible restriction of their right to political information.

We are well aware of the fact that it is not the province of the US to overturn a decision made by a leading body of a national section. We appeal, however, to the International leadership to use its weighty moral authority to prevent the application of such an illegitimate measure. To this end, we ask that our request be examined in the upcoming meeting of the United Secretariat.

Communist Greetings,
s/Muriel, Nemo, Raphael

P.S.- The signers of this letter do not intend to cancel their trips to the United States. They will get in touch with the International leadership and give a full accounting of their actions with respect to the SWP congress.

cc: Political Bureau of LCR
SWP leadership