

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
September 21, 1976

TO ALL NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is a letter from Pierre Lambert to Jack Barnes,
Jack Barnes's response, and a related letter to John Barzman.

These are for NC information only.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice Waters
Mary-Alice Waters

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TRANSLATION

July 23, 1976

Dear Comrade,

I express my personal thanks for your invitation and my regret that I am unable to attend the SWP convention, since I have international commitments that I cannot free myself from. Specifically, I have to go to Portugal at the same time to participate in the congress of our Portuguese comrades. The situation for our work there is so delicate that I am sure you will understand why I cannot change my schedule.

I would, however, like to offer some reflections. And, if you find it convenient, I am ready to meet with you in the United States in September or October.

I inform you that the Political Bureau of the OCI has delegated Comrade Francois, a leader of our International Commission, to attend your congress.

The fact that there was a revisionist current in the ranks of the Fourth International is something that we together have noted and described since 1950-53. The fact that this revisionist current has not laid down its arms can be seen in the struggle that you, the SWP, for your part have been conducting since 1969 in the ranks of the United Secretariat, and in the one that we, along with the organizations adhering to the Organizing Committee to Reconstruct the Fourth International, have been conducting. The differences now cover all the most important questions of principle, strategy, and tactics. Mandel has just taken a step forward, publicly stating that he considered liquidating the Fourth International, and thus its program, a possibility. At the same time, the LCR leadership has not hesitated to come out in support of the Union of the Left-Popular Front.

As you know, we asked to be allowed to participate in the preparatory discussion for the various international congresses of the United Secretariat, including in setting the agenda. Our proposal had no conditions or strings attached. We agreed in advance to participate in any capacity, whether as delegates or observers. We agreed to help with the finances of these congresses. Of course, this perspective implies the right to express positions freely, to circulate documents freely inside the organizations that claim adherence to the Fourth International. I note that in 1952 we agreed to accept discipline as regards the line adopted by the Third Congress. We asked what the statutes of the Fourth International guarantee; the right to form an international tendency. Pablo refused. It was because we asked for something that Trotskyists should be able to take for granted that the French majority was expelled in 1952 from the International.

Today, what do we see? A complete refusal to discuss with

the organizations adhering to the Organizing Committee to Reconstruct the Fourth International. The United Secretariat Majority heaps one pretext on another. They have asked us for a "less violent" tone in the polemic. We have agreed. But that made no difference. The LCR leadership seized on a provocation mounted by Varga in the ranks of the Trotskyist organizations as a pretext to reject discussion. We agreed to participate in a "Commission of Inquiry." In this commission, a representative of the LCR said:

"I want to say this. Until the contrary is proved, I don't question the authenticity of the documents. Unless I am misinformed, but as far as I know, Varga has recognized their authenticity. And he is in a position to know...I think as of now, unless new evidence contradicts this, that these documents have not been forged by you, and if you want a statement to that effect, you have it."

But that made no difference. Rouge published a communiqué by the provocateur Varga denouncing so-called acts of violence without even trying to get in contact with the OCI to check out the false allegations made by this provocateur. This wasn't enough. Our Portuguese comrades made a proposal to the LCI leadership to open a discussion. The LCI refused, using as a pretext acts of violence between these two organizations in Portugal, though there was no violence.

It is clear that for the United Secretariat majority, these pretexts have only one end. They are aimed at preventing the opening of discussion among the organizations that claim to be Trotskyist and, what is more, at increasing the obstacles to a real discussion, including in the ranks of the organizations adhering to the United Secretariat. The method of the current close to the PST in Latin America, which is converging with the United Secretariat majority, attests that this is the course the United Secretariat majority has set out on. There can be no doubts about this. Everywhere and always revisionism has operated in this way.

So, a question is posed for our two organizations. Are we going to let the majority faction of the United Secretariat unilaterally define the arena in which the political struggle of Trotskyism against revisionism must take place? Are we going to let them go on much longer taking advantage of a situation where by blocking discussion among the organizations adhering to Trotskyism they can try to isolate the Trotskyists?

"What do labels matter. If in the political arena we find forces that agree with our strategic and tactical orientation but are repelled only by our historical reference point and name, we will drop these inside of twenty-four hours." (Mandel in his interview with Politique Hebdo.)

We must take a position and decide, regardless of the cost, to open an international discussion. The forms of course will

have to be carefully considered. We must take a position, that is a fact; because the process of disintegration in the Fourth International and in a whole series of organizations formally adhering to it, such as the LCR, is so far along that delay can be gravely damaging to the international movement.

We are ready, for our part, to study together with you the possibilities for beginning to put an end to the dispersion that is now rampant in the ranks of the supporters of the Fourth International.

I wish you the greatest success in the work of your convention.

Fraternal greetings,

/s/Pierre Lambert

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14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
September 18, 1976

Pierre Lambert
Paris

Dear comrade Lambert,

I am sorry for the lateness in responding to your letter. It arrived after I left for Ohio prior to our convention, and, as comrade Francois may have mentioned to you, several of us did not come directly back from the convention. Francois did mention during the convention that there was a letter from you that he assumed had arrived, but thought there would be no reason why it could not be answered when we all returned from vacation.

On a couple of the political points raised in your letter. I do not agree with your interpretation of the statement made by comrade Mandel in the Politique Hebdo article. All I interpret comrade Mandel to be saying is the straightforward and correct point that there are major maneuvers and fusions still ahead of the Fourth International, which remains small; that entries, regroupments and fusions, will certainly have to take place; and the exact form of these will be subordinated to the political goal of the Trotskyists carrying them out.

Of course, if done in a wrong way, a maneuver can lead toward organizational and programmatic liquidation. It may be your view that that is what comrade Mandel's goal is, a view I consider a wrong one. But, I can't see how an objective reading of the sentences you quote can reach the conclusion that comrade Mandel is "publicly proposing the liquidation of the Fourth International and its program."

I take it you have political differences with the line expressed in that issue of Politique Hebdo by some leading individuals of the Fourth International. But that is quite another matter from what you read into that one quote.

I have a similar reaction to your statement that the LCR leadership "has come out in support of the Union of the Left-Popular Front." The LCR leadership has called for a vote for the Union of the Left candidates in specific circumstances. My opinion on the incorrectness of this is a matter of public record. But to say that they support a popular front is no more correct than the statement that the OCRFI supports reformist workers parties because it calls upon the workers to vote for them in certain countries. The LCR is one of the most vehement critics of the class collaborationism of the Union of the Left.

Even if one holds the view, stated in your letter, that some of the political positions held by the Fourth International are actually revisions of the Trotskyist program, that does not

justify exaggerating the actual concrete political positions that are taken. It is an obstacle to having political discussions when that is done.

As to the Varga matter, I am happy that you cooperated with the Commission of Inquiry. I hope the findings put a number of obstacles behind us. Of course, any public statements concerning the OCI or OCRFI coming from Varga supporters should be checked before being printed. If this inadvertently is not done, then an opportunity to respond should be given. This has always been the normal way the press of the workers movement proceeds in matters of this sort. I am sure Rouge would rectify the record if an error of fact has been made.

I would be happy to see you if you are going to be stopping in New York on your way to or from a North American visit this fall. Of course, I will not discuss internal matters of the Fourth International. Any discussion along these lines, comes within the framework established by the United Secretariat. But, as is our norm, I would be happy to hear your views on the big political questions raised by the class struggle that face revolutionists on a world scale.

Fraternally,

/s/Jack Barnes

cc: United Secretariat
LCR Political Bureau

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14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
September 18, 1976

John Barzman
Los Angeles

Dear John,

Enclosed is a letter I received from Pierre Lambert and my response to it. If he comes through New York and wants to present his views on political matters, I would like you to be present. This was the form that the United Secretariat representative to our convention explained the comrades used in Britain when they met with Pablo, that is inviting both LTF and IMT leaders of the section to be present to hear Pablo's views. If you are not going to be East any time this fall, (as you can tell from the letter, I'm not sure if or when Lambert may drop in), could you suggest an IMT supporter here I might ask to sit in on such a meeting?

Comradely,

/s/Jack Barnes

enc.

cc: United Secretariat