

11/16/77

To the Political Committee

Dear Comrades,

The attached documents were submitted for discussion to the IMT Steering Committee meeting held on November 1.

Comrades should read the documents in preparation for the International Report which will be given to the Political Committee on Friday.

Natalie

I.

1. During the first half of 1977, after eight years of tendency and faction struggles which sometimes threatened the unity of our movement, the elements for a substantial modification of the internal situation of the International arose. This has been concretized by the decision of the LTF and the IMT to dissolve. This process of dissolution of the LTF and IMT, of consolidation of the unity of the International, of reassertion of the normal functioning of the leadership bodies democratically elected by the World Congress, and of strengthening of the International's capacity for public initiative, must be understood primarily in relation to the new opportunities for development facing our movement. Any new delay in bringing the functioning of the International into line with these tasks would entail serious risks of having promising objective situations spoiled because of our movement's weaknesses in intervening.

2. The end of the Francoist dictatorship, the high level of workers mobilization, and the new intensification of the leadership crisis of the bourgeoisie in Spain and the crisis of the regime on the eve of the legislative elections of March 1978 in France constitute the most advanced expressions of the basic trends now unfolding in a number of European countries. The shifts in the relationship of forces within the workers movement, closely related to the evolution of the relationship of class forces in favor of the proletariat, offer the Fourth International a historic opportunity to root itself in the working class in order to build an alternative, a revolutionary leadership to the leadership of the reformist apparatuses. The new phase of the crisis of Stalinism, which will profoundly shake the monolithic character of the Communist parties and will aggravate the crisis of the bureaucracy's control over society in the USSR and the countries of East Europe, should enable us to broaden our audience, both quantitatively and qualitatively, among those toilers who play a decisive role in organizing the working class. The applicability of the transitional program as a whole is enhanced in such a context, as is the necessity of the International's concentrating all its forces in responding to the battles now looming ahead and in building sections capable both of contesting the reformists for leadership of the working class and of opposing their policy of class collaboration.

Some of the features of the crisis now rocking the imperialist countries which have been primarily and most acutely manifested in capitalist Europe are now taking shape in Japan and North America. These factors fuel processes of radicalization, often still molecular and differentiated, in the working class and are enabling the Trotskyist organizations to forge new links with the toiling masses.

In Latin America the crisis of Castroism and of the populist nationalist currents, a crisis which will last for a long period, along with the increase in the social weight of the working class in the major countries, have already enabled the Trotskyist organizations to come forward on the political scene in

some countries with considerably more strength. These factors enhance the objective opportunities for taking advantage of the openings which may arise in the future as the dictatorships fall into crisis.

Finally, the latest repercussions of the crisis of Maoism and the liquidation of the "cultural revolution" are disorienting and disintegrating the organizations adhering to the policy of the Chinese Communist Party, organizations which command (or commanded) significant influence among some layers of toilers in a number of countries. This can only intensify the zigzags and political disarray of the centrist organizations of Maoist origins. Indeed, in situations of open political crisis they have been revealed as incapable of presenting comprehensive political responses alternative to those advanced by the traditional organizations of the workers movement. In addition, they have continually vacillated between the most frenetic sectarianism and adaptation to the orientation of the reformist parties.

3. Three priorities are required dealing with a situation of rapid evolution of the class struggle on an international scale and in coming to grips with the opportunities for significant growth of our movement: strengthening the International as a world party regulated by the norms of democratic centralism; conducting a broad discussion in the leadership bodies on the crucial political questions, one which ensures the participation of the leaderships of sections and sympathizing organizations as well as of all the militants; a policy of opening and regroupment toward the forces which consider themselves Trotskyist and those coming closer to Trotskyism in practice and in their conceptions.

It is within this perspective that the IMT places the discussion of tendencies and factions, which must aid us in responding to these priority tasks.

II.

1. This assessment of the international political situation and the consequent opportunities for growth of the International constitutes the framework for the dissolution of the IMT.

But two things must be added: first, a sober analysis of the negative effects the long period of permanent tendency and faction struggles has had on the functioning and development of the International, its sections, and sympathizing organizations; second, the indications that changes in the organizational situation are occurring (national fusions, dissolution of tendencies in national sections), as well as the list of certain political and practical convergences at the present time.

Under the circumstances, the dissolution of the IMT is not directly contingent on a political agreement with the LTF sanctioned, for example, by common resolutions. Indeed, it is obvious that political

differences on a series of questions persist, although their character and scope must be reevaluated. A dissolution which would suggest, without sufficient prior discussion in the regular leading bodies of the International, that political agreements between the IMT and the LTF on decisive questions already exist could lead to laying the basis for the outbreak of a new faction struggle should clear disagreements crop up on one point or another.

2; The dissolution of the IMT, which falls within the general political framework traced out above, is determined essentially by:

a) The necessity of reinstating the full functioning of the leadership bodies of the International so that new discussions and elaboration may unfold within these bodies without a priori crystallization. Only after such a discussion, one which integrates both the changes in the objective situation and the experiences of the major sections, will it be possible to detail the points on which there are real disagreements and to arrive at ways to discuss them.

b) The necessity of building an international leadership that functions on the basis of collective elaboration, integrating the new generations of leaders of sections, most of whom experience is confined to an International characterized by tendency and faction debates. At this stage of the building of the International, the definition and implementation of the norms of functioning of an international leadership requires the dissolution of tendencies and factions. The composition and expansion of our ranks make this task as important as it has ever been in the entire history of Trotskyism, and as delicate to concretize in practice.

III.

1. At a time when the dissolution of tendencies and factions is on the agenda, it must be stressed that the discussions which have occurred in the International reflected differences of orientation which were directly related to the concrete problems of the class struggle on an international scale, although the polemic did impose its own logic at times. Indeed, this is proof that our movement is not a sect. The critical reexamination of its own orientation which the IMT has been able to make and the discussions and crises within the LTF (break with the current led by the Argentine PST over Portugal and Angola, debate between the leadership of the LC and the LTF over the boycott slogan in the June 1977 elections in Spain) echoed major political events. In the final analysis, the very dissolution of the IMT and the LTF was facilitated precisely by a sensitivity to concrete political developments that was maintained over and above the sharpest polemics.

2. More than ever, it must be stressed that the present dissolution of factions and tendencies has been made possible and was in a certain sense politically prepared by the battle the IMT systematically waged for the maintenance of an organizationally united International. This political struggle was based

on two fundamental considerations: first, the necessity of striving for an International regulated by the norms of democratic centralism and genuinely present in the centers decisive for the international class struggle (particularly North America); second, the refusal to characterize the other tendencies of the International, particularly the LTF and its major components, Argentine and American, as currents that were breaking with Trotskyism, had degenerated, or were centrist in character.

It is indicative of the dangerous logic of permanent tendency and faction polemics that this question — the characterization of an "opponent" tendency or faction — was also posed in the LTF. For example, the component led by the leadership of the Argentine PST developed positions, now adopted by the Portuguese PRT in official documents, which qualify the majority leadership of the International as "Poumist" and "Zimmerwaldian." Or, another example, the LTF leadership of the LC, which as of 1975 adopted a document characterizing the IMT as a "centrist" tendency. The persistence of such tendencies in the LTF is not unrelated to its crisis and to the debates which occurred within it up to and during its dissolution.

Similar pressures were felt within the IMT, particularly since they were able to draw strength from the expulsion of the militants of the Internationalist Tendency from the SWP in violation of respect for the norms of democratic functioning, an event which brought tension in the International to its peak. Nevertheless, these pressures were always combatted and never crystallized. The common attitude taken on this question by the leadership of the IMT and the leaders of the SWP who adhered to the LTF greatly contributed to laying the basis for the present turn in the situation in the International.

3. As we affirmed in the call for the formation of the IMT in 1972, the debate partially reflected the uneven development of the class struggle on an international scale and thus approaches to various political problems from different angles and at varying rhythms. Our understanding of this objective basis which partially determined the discussions in our movement enabled us to avoid the ever-present trap of claiming that one tendency of an International could be 100% correct on all the political problems posed, could grasp all the aspects of such a complex global reality. Thus, the IMT was able to take advantage of the positive result of this debate to draw up a critical assessment of the erroneous positions on Latin America it took at the Ninth and Tenth World Congresses. The same process was manifested in Canada and Quebec in the fusion of the organizations linked to the LTF (LSA/LSO) and those linked to the IMT (RMG-GMR). Indeed, a critical look backward was taken and past positions were changed on problems of such importance as the national question in Quebec, the NDP, and the building of a pan-Canadian organization. In Mexico agreement on a political resolution was reached at the recent fusion congress of the PRT and the LS. In Spain a similar process of discussion, exchange, and evolution (which in fact lent the tendency debate a positive value) has permitted a recomposition of Spanish Trotskyism which will soon lead to the fusion of all the forces of the Fourth International within the LCR.

At the time of the dissolution of the IMT and the LTF, the ability to draw an objective balance-sheet of one's own positions and their evolution is a decisive factor in lending the past debate its true value, in avoiding new factional tensions in the future, and in enabling the leadership of the International to function collectively. The leadership of the pan-Canadian organization has been able to do this, as has that of the LCR. On the other hand, the Steering Committee of the LTF, at least judging by the reports published by this body (see IIDB Vol. XIV, No. 8, September 1977) has not made such a critical reassessment. Its balance-sheet is totally uncritical, in spite of the crisis of the LTF and the internal debates which divided it.

IV.

At the time of the dissolution of the IMT, it is useful to highlight the essential political contributions the tendency made to the International over the past period.

*The IMT was able to grasp the new features of the period which opened in Europe with May 1968 and the "hot autumn" in Italy. It understood the objective roots of the socioeconomic and political crisis which began to afflict the imperialist system and thus avoided falling victim to the impression that the diplomatic operations of the USSR, China, and the USA in the framework known as "detente" could modify the features of this period.

*It understood the changes in the relationship of forces within the workers movement and the expression of these changes in the emergence of a broad workers vanguard as well as the consequences for our intervention and the building of our organizations.

*As of 1972 it stressed the importance of the self-organization of the workers, the foundations of this semispontaneous thrust toward forms of rank-and-file democracy, and the possible emergence of potential organs of workers power in this period. The Portuguese crisis of the summer of 1975 confirmed the import of this. The importance the IMT gave to these features of the present rise of the workers — sometimes a bit one-sidedly, granted — was linked to an understanding of the processes of development of class consciousness and of the key role the emergence of and experience with a situation of dual power play in the maturation of class consciousness and in the crisis of legitimacy of the institutions of the bourgeois state. It was within the same perspective that the IMT stressed the centrality of transitional demands around the axis of workers control (which was also fully confirmed by the Portuguese "revolutionary process").

*As early as 1970 (see the editorial in *Quatrieme Internationale*, January 1970), future leaders of the IMT pointed to the opening of a new phase in the crisis of Stalinism and to its effects both on relations between the Soviet bureaucracy and the CPs of West Europe and Japan and on the CPs themselves.

*The IMT demonstrated a precise understanding of the nature of the process of permanent revolution under way in Vietnam and of the world relationship of forces of which that process was a part.

This led the IMT to perceive at precisely the right time both the ultimate defeat of American imperialism and the emergence of a workers state, as well as its bureaucratic deformations.

*The IMT systematically underscored the interclass nature of nationalist ideology and highlighted the dialectic between permanent revolution and the national liberation struggle.

*The IMT immediately emphasized the real stakes of the civil war in Angola and the fact that a victory for the MPLA and its Cuban allies would deal a decisive blow to the coalition of South Africa, the FNLA, and UNITA. The IMT's position of support to the struggle of the MPLA in no way modified its characterization of the MPLA as a petty-bourgeois force and of the state that emerged as a bourgeois state.

Obviously, stressing these contributions the IMT made to an understanding of the political context in which the International is being built today does not mean that there has been no critical reflection on some aspects of these analyses and orientations that were drawn from them.

V.

Although the dissolution of the IMT is not directly linked to a political agreement with the LTF, a series of elements do enable us to establish a new framework for the discussion preparatory to the Eleventh World Congress and for defining the initiatives of the International.

1. The intensity of the organizational crisis linked to the permanent faction polemic resulted in a number of national splits. On the other hand, the announcement of a number of fusions or statements in favor of fusions (Spain, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Colombia, Hong Kong) herald a turn which will have effects in the International.

The fusion processes in Canada and Spain concretize a convergent approach to new political situations. In this sense, they are indices of the possibility of similar processes taking shape on an international scale. The dissolution of tendencies in the International directly aids the consolidation of the fusions which have been achieved, the completion of those now under way, and the development of political discussion in these sections which are not predicated on past debates and can more easily enrich the political capital of the International as a whole.

2. Convergences have emerged on a series of important political questions. The resolution on "Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" was drafted and adopted by members of the United Secretariat belonging to both the IMT and the LTF. In the framework of the present discussions a broad agreement has been reached on the tasks of the LCI in Portugal and the LCR in Spain. Likewise, in Quebec, the United States, Canada, and Mexico the IMT and LTF have come together in support of the general line or orientation defined by the sections or Trotskyist organizations in these countries. In addition, an effective convergence seems to exist on the assessment of "Eurocommunism" and the possibilities of our organizations' making an intervention toward the Communist parties and Communist youth organizations and participating in the discussions beginning to develop there.

It will be possible to test the scope and nature of these convergences during the preparation of the Eleventh World Congress and during the discussions within the sections. But this task can be fully carried out only to the extent that the regular functioning and strengthening of the leadership bodies are assured, and only to the extent that it is possible to integrate the leaderships of sections into these discussions. It is only after such a "procedure" and in the event of substantial differences — not necessarily coinciding with the old lines of cleavage — that the formation of ideological tendencies could be envisaged.

VI.

Today, after the dissolution of tendencies, the International is facing the following tasks:

1. The organization of a World Congress which permits a broad discussion in the ranks of our movement, according to the priorities defined in the United Secretariat resolution of October 1976. The leaderships of the sections must be able to participate in elaborating the major documents so that the experience of the sections, quantitatively and qualitatively superior to that which existed on the eve of the Tenth World Congress, can be incorporated into these documents.

In setting the date for the congress we must seek to strike a balance between the needs of elaboration and the internal discussion on the one hand and the necessity of responding as a world movement to the new stage now opening, particularly in Europe, and to the new problems now emerging in Latin America on the other hand.

The dissolution of tendencies makes the need for a precise orientation for all the members, for the intervention of a world party, even more imperative. It also sharpens the necessity of assimilating the lessons of the whole past period through a discussion in depth of the present stage of building the International and of its norms of functioning.

The Eleventh World Congress must also permit the actual inauguration of a mode of functioning of the International which is commensurate with the new internal situation and which, in the event of the resurgence of tendencies, will enable us to avoid as far as possible the centrifugal tendencies that marked the past period. The holding of the World Congress before the end of 1978 should permit us to respond to these objectives.

2. The dissolution of tendencies implies that the documents which were part of the past platforms will not be considered the basis for the preparation of new resolutions, nor will they be submitted to a vote in the bodies of the International. The elaboration of all the documents must be initiated in the leadership bodies without prejudging the agreements or disagreements in any way. It is only after such a discussion that the possible existence of disagreements might lead to examining the further modalities of discussion, a question which must also be broached within the leadership bodies first.

The five essential points which must be at the center of future elaboration are as follows: norms of functioning of the International (democratic centralism); the building of revolutionary parties in

capitalist Europe; the world political resolution; the women's liberation movement; the resolution on Latin America.

Following the critical balance-sheet of the IMT, the explicit rejection of the orientation of the Ninth World Congress on Latin America and of the elements which extended this orientation into the resolutions of the Tenth World Congress must be ratified by the International as such. This requires defining a positive orientation for Latin America based on an analysis of the past period and of the new strategic problems that are posed.

3. The strengthening of the center is an absolute priority in implementing these tasks, although we cannot prejudge the various steps which lead to this objective or the modes of functioning of a center which must aim at creating a real leadership team. Nevertheless, this strengthening must conform to the conception of the International upheld in the present statutes and synthesized in this formula: "Only an international organization can be the bearer of an internationalist ideology. The organizational form flows from the platform of the party and must correspond to it. Trotsky demonstrated the necessity and primacy of the international organization with iron logic." (John G. Wright, Fourth International, August 1946.) Past experience has taught us the importance of striking a balance between collective elaboration, internal discussion, and public debate under the control of the normal leadership organs. This latter aspect is all the more important with the dissolution of the LTF and the IMT.

The development of capacities of analysis, strategic orientations, and discussions must have a channel of public expression, which requires, among other things, an official publication under the political responsibility of the daily leadership of the International. Such an organ is of extreme importance in educating and homogenizing the ranks of the International in the current international conjuncture. It must also serve as a channel of expression for a portion of the political elaboration of the section leaderships and must reflect the development of our movement. It should be easy to establish such an organ on the basis of the resources, audience, and experience of Inprecor and Intercontinental Press, and, if possible, Revista de America.

4. The probable maintenance of the Bolshevik Tendency after the dissolution of the LTF and the IMT will pose problems for the functioning of the bodies of the International.

The BT has stepped up its factional practices within the International (rejection of fusion on the basis of characterizing the majority as "Poumist," splits). These practices have been combined with public attacks on certain sections of the International and against its leadership. The functioning of the BT implies the conception that recognition and application of democratic centralism are conditional on prior political agreement, even on tactical questions.

Nevertheless, in no way can this modify the attitude of the leadership of the International, which must seek to integrate representatives of the BT into the regular functioning of the leadership organs, with all the attendant rights and duties.

In its critical balance-sheet on Latin America the IMT recognized the error that was made in not recognizing the PST as the Argentine section. During the next World Congress the PST will have to be recognized as the official section, on the basis of objective and universal criteria.

A political discussion will have to be opened on the positions upheld by the BT. Given the manifest violation of the norms of functioning of the International, this will mean defending the principles which must regulate the functioning of the International. All this must not imply any measure of an administrative type against the BT.

5. The new situation in the International, the fact that it has proven capable of dealing with such a bitter debate over such a long period, will increase the attractiveness of the International and its sections in the eyes of currents and organizations which consider themselves Trotskyist or are coming closer to Trotskyism.

The discussions and projects for collaboration with Lutte Ouvriere should be followed up in this framework. The discussion with the OCRFI will begin in coming weeks. Its political content must aim at clarifying the evolution of this current, some of whose components, such as the GSTQ (Quebec), collaborate with our sections seriously and systematically. Similar developments are on the agenda in other countries, particularly Britain.

Generally speaking, this policy of opening and regroupment is the reflection of our capacity to actually conceive of an international revolutionary organization as the result of regroupments of various currents which agree on the program of revolutionary Marxism, the necessity for and mode of functioning of an International regulated by democratic centralism, and the major tasks of the period.

[David (Holland). Not passed. Never put to a vote.]

pg. 10

AMENDMENTS TO 'FOR THE DISSOLUTION OF THE IMT, FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF THE INTERNATIONAL'

proposed by IMT-members of Political Bureau of the IKB, Internationale Kommunistenbond, International Communist League, Dutch section of the Fourth International

page 4

DELETE 'and genuinely present in the centers decisive for the international class struggle (particularly North America)'

DELETE in line 7 'also'

REPLACE last paragraph 'Similar pressures.....situation in the international' of point 2 with:

The expulsion of the militants of the Internationalist Tendency from the SWP was a blatant violation of any respect for the norms of democratic functioning. This event brought tension in the International to its peak. Nevertheless, the centrifugal tendencies produced by this, including in the IMT, never crystallized.

page 5

DELETE paragraph 'As early as 1970 (see the editorial.... on the CPs themselves'

page 6

after chapter IV:

ADD: Despite these political gains registered through the contributions of the IMT, the IMT's responsibilities in the underorganization of the International, and notably the practical inefficiency of the Center as a political organizing Center for the International as a whole, must be added on the negative side of the balance sheet.

page 7

(on this point a more pointed amendment might be formulated, but we consider this as a minimum statement of intentions)

ADD (after chapter V)

The International, and notably the USec will have to work out concrete ways and means to make the necessary integration of the leaderships of sections possible. The possibility of regular meetings of the Political Bureaus (or delegations of..) in a politico-geographical sector (e.g. Capitalist Europe) can be one of these means.

Motivations will be given by our interventions at the meeting.

AMENDMENT TO THE IMT DECLARATION OF DISSOLUTION
TO BE INSERTED AT THE END OF SECTION IV (pg. 6; English version)

submitted by Mackenzie, RWL/LOR (Canadian state)

By no means is there unanimity in the IMT about the content of this critical reflection. This is an additional factor indicating the need to dissolve the IMT. This will permit a reevaluation on certain issues to develop through a common discussion with non-IMT comrades in the framework of the unitary structures of the International. Artificially confining this discussion inside a tendency whose historical role has been completed would be negative and unprincipled.

However, beyond looking back at the purely theoretical and political merits of various positions advanced by our tendency, the moment of its dissolution also compels us to examine the concrete political struggle which unfolded in the Fourth International since 1969. In order to understand the origins and meaning of this struggle; and the stakes involved, it is necessary to recall the reality of our international movement before the Ninth World Congress and the way in which it has been transformed over the last decade.

In fact, before 1969, the International barely existed. With a few exceptions, the national sections were no more than tiny nuclei, incapable of systematic political intervention in certain cases, little more than paper organizations. Moreover, this was a movement whose mentality and political outlook was profoundly affected by its condition, by the political isolation imposed upon it through the entire postwar epoch.

The change in the objective situation analyzed by the Ninth World Congress determined the character of that Congress. It began a process of profound rupture with those aspects of the International's past noted above.

In retrospect, it is not surprising that this change, this "turn" was accompanied by a huge crisis of the movement; which is only now drawing to a close. The balance sheet of the tendency and faction fight has to be placed in this context.

The IMT fought consciously to carry through this process of transformation: to "deghettoize" the Trotskyist movement; to reinsert it into the mainstream of political life of the broad revolutionary movement and the labor movement as a whole; to understand that the political problems posed by these tasks and by new phenomena in the class struggle could not simply be answered by Talmudic reference to the classical texts of Marxism, especially when these references were chosen with a peculiarly one-sided selectivity. It fought against a dogmatic and conservative resistance to this process, a resistance which had its own logic leading, in certain cases, to very serious problems of right-wing opportunism.

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Such a struggle had its dangers. It was guaranteed that the project of transformation defined by the Ninth Congress and defended since 1972 by the IMT would be accompanied by political errors and political problems. It is probable that more than the inevitable minimum of such mistakes were committed. There was always the risk that a new generation of Trotskyist militants, seeking to break with dogmatism and with the negative aspects of the International during its long period of isolation and stagnation, would also minimize the positive aspects of the movement's traditions.

The doubly negative effect of the Ninth World Congress position on Latin America should also be noted. In addition to its intrinsic political errors, vis-a-vis Latin America, this position also had the effect of completely obscuring the real choices facing the Fourth International for a considerable portion of our movement.

The inexcusable delay in the rectification of this position ensured the distortion of other debates, especially on Europe. Thus, the self-criticism on Latin America must also assume a dual character. Above and beyond assuming responsibility for the negative effects of the position in Latin America itself, the IMT must also assume part of the responsibility for the extent of the crisis which developed in the International.

Having said all this, we remain convinced that such a struggle was necessary to take forward the International and to avoid its marginalization in the new period which opened in the late 1960s. We remain further convinced that the opposition to this process was not solely nor even primarily motivated by the IMT's errors on Latin America or on other questions. This seems to us to be verified in part; at least, by the breakup of the LC, the principal LTF force in Europe, the continuing evolution of the Bolshevik Tendency, formerly the Latin American wing of the LTF, and the fact that the beginning of a possible rapprochement with the SWP follows a radical rupture with its previous orientation.

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