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To Leninist-Trotskyist Faction Coordinators

Dear Comrades,

The attached outline is a draft of a tendency declaration being prepared by several comrades in the Belgian section. The part on Europe especially will be helpful to comrades preparing reports for the branch discussion.

Since this draft has not been formally submitted, you should not quote from it or refer to it in your reports. You should also be careful not to leave it lying around. We have sent only one copy to the faction leadership in each branch.

After it has been submitted to the internal discussion in the Belgian section, it will be published in an Internal Information Bulletin for the SWP membership.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice
Mary-Alice Waters

DRAFT TENDENCY DECLARATION

I. Latin America

We declare our agreement with the general line of the document "Argentina and Bolivia -- The Balance Sheet." (International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 10, No. 1, January 1973.)

Two important errors were committed at the Ninth World Congress:

--A strategic orientation of rural guerrilla warfare was adopted (afterwards a quite noticeable shift was made toward urban guerrilla warfare, especially in Argentina; this occurred before the United Secretariat took its distance from the PRT).

--The entire line adopted by the Ninth World Congress was based on a single eventuality: fierce repression against every mass movement, indeed against every strike (the supposition was that the problem of armed struggle would be posed from the beginning of almost any movement). This disoriented our sections when the mass movements forced the bourgeoisie to retreat and to permit democratic openings, such as in Bolivia under Ovando and Torres and in Argentina at the present time.

We believe that one of the essential tasks of the Tenth World Congress is to draw a balance sheet on the Latin American resolution of the Ninth World Congress, a balance sheet that the "majority" tendency refuses to draw, contenting itself instead with stating that the resolution contained synthetic and elliptical statements and with criticizing the ERP-Santucho when the group had already virtually left the International. Furthermore, we wish to emphasize that drawing a balance sheet on the Ninth World Congress resolution does not mean seeing whether or not our Latin American sections have retained a mass base or whether or not they adapted empirically to the tasks imposed by the political situation, but instead to determine whether or not the Ninth World Congress resolution prepared them for carrying out these tasks. The balance sheet for Bolivia and Argentina is quite clear in this regard, and our conclusion is just as clear: the line of the Ninth World Congress must be overturned.

To assure the greatest clarity concerning Latin America we would like to call attention to the following points:

--We are of the opinion that the [Latin American] bourgeoisie has at its disposal a much narrower economic margin for maneuver than the bourgeoisie in the imperialist countries. In the political arena this is reflected by the general tendency to use the army to crush mass movements by installing a military dictatorship.

--While this general tendency exists, it is also equally necessary to keep in mind the full significance of exceptional prerevolutionary periods during which the mass movement can force the bourgeoisie to permit democratic openings, and during which decisive steps can be taken (by using all legal opportunities) in building the revolutionary party and in organizing the masses, including when they take up arms.

--Since the only way the masses can prevent or defeat a military coup is by arming themselves in massive numbers and by or-

ganizing themselves into workers and peasants militias, one of the important tasks of revolutionaries is to prepare the masses for this by instilling in them a spirit in which self-defense becomes a systematic reflex.

--In Latin America more so than anywhere else, work within the army is a pressing and vital task: on this point there is no need for further comment.

Our fundamental difference with the Mandel tendency lies in the fact that we believe the problem of arming the working class is a problem of political leadership and of rooting the revolutionary organization; it is a problem that must be resolved by a whole system of demands and types of actions. It is only once we have become rooted and have won the leadership of certain sectors of the mass movement that we will be able to take initiatives toward self-defense and armament. We will do it from within this movement and in its name; in this way its "exemplary" character will be that much greater.

We therefore refuse to throw our sections, which are tiny minorities, into a "strategy of armed struggle" (detachments of the party carrying out very small-scale actions under their own banners,

--because -- given the isolated character of such initiatives -- this would lead to suicide and bring down selective repression on our sections, and

--limit their implantation,

--which would in turn jeopardize arming the working class and the peasants, as well as jeopardizing armed struggle when it is imposed by the objective needs of the class struggle (and the tactical decision about when to do this -- which is of vital importance -- must be made by the sections and not by a document that offers a strategy on a continental scale).

Finally, the Mandel tendency's failure to respond on the necessity and the possibility of doing work in the army in Latin America leads us to suspect that there may be a difference between us there as well.

II. Europe.

We believe that we have too many differences -- including differences on fundamental points -- to be able to support the Mandel tendency's European resolution.

We believe it is possible to write a document on Europe that analyzes the broad outlines of its economic, social, and political evolution, but that it is impossible to deduce from that -- as the European document does -- quite detailed forecasts and a certain number of tactics for all of Europe and all the [European] sections.

We would like to give our evaluation of the period:

--There is no question but that Europe has witnessed a general upsurge of workers struggles since 1968, an upsurge that

cannot fail to lead to class confrontations of an even harsher character, inasmuch as the inter-imperialist rivalry is growing stronger and the economic situation is deteriorating.

--Having said that, while the possibility of a revolutionary crisis may exist in some countries (France, Italy, Spain, Great Britain) the European document puts far too little emphasis on the different rhythms of development of the class struggle in the European countries and offers an insufficient analysis of the role the workers parties can play in a period in which an untimely upsurge of class struggles occurs.

--In this regard, the European document errs in the direction of opportunism by moving very quickly -- and in a very superficial way -- to link together the economic crisis, the political crisis of the bourgeoisie, the crisis of reformism, and the revolutionary crisis; this is done without analyzing, for example, what could happen in France if one day the Union of the Left replaces the UDR [Gaullists] -- who are in fact in a state of crisis -- as the bourgeoisie's solution.

-- All this is possible only because the Mandel tendency has remained very vague about its prognosis concerning Europe as a whole. We have already heard contradictory statements from the Mandel tendency on the four-to-five-years question. In his reply to Comrade Waters, Pierre Frank seems to say -- in a sentence that's vague enough to be called elliptical four years from now -- that the perspective is for the generalization of revolutionary crises throughout Europe. We refuse to accept that as a certainty on which the entire activity of our sections should be based. This generalization is only a possibility; the political line must be elaborated by analyzing -- in a more general framework -- the evolution of the political situation in each country.

The European document accords great importance to what is called the "mass vanguard," and "winning hegemony within this mass vanguard" is extolled as the universal tactic for building the party in the present period (cf. "Three Tactics" [IIDB, Vol. 9, No. 5, November 1972, "The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe," p. 18]).

First, we would like to emphasize that this is a goal and not a "tactic." the fact that at present this "mass vanguard" has in large part escaped the control of the traditional leadership of the working class (unlike the situation during the period of entryism) still does not turn this goal into a tactic.

Furthermore, we believe that the term "mass vanguard" tends to make the elaboration of a political line more difficult in the sense that it includes radicalized workers as well as radicalized youth (despite the social barrier), and the Trotskyists, those who belong to no organized group, and the Maoists (despite an important political barrier). As we shall see, these distinctions are vitally important for the elaboration of a political line.

Insofar as we are concerned, here is our opinion on this mass vanguard:

--We agree that it represents an extremely important factor for building revolutionary parties, and that these radicalized

youth and radicalized workers are an "operative factor."

--On this point, however, we must understand both the power this vanguard has for taking tactical initiatives and its weakness insofar as working toward our strategic objective is concerned, i.e., winning the leadership of the working class. And it's here that it's necessary to take into account all the social and political differences we mentioned: It's possible to hold demonstrations and occupy universities with radicalized young people and the Maoists, but it is much more difficult to work in the trade unions with them or even to intervene in a reformist demonstration, not to mention building a revolutionary party. It is easier to carry out our trade-union work aimed at building a new working-class leadership with unorganized workers than with unorganized radicalized students, etc.

We believe that the European document devotes too little attention precisely to our strategic task (winning the leadership of the working class): there is a vast gulf between the present, a revolutionary crisis, and a situation of dual power. Comrades who ask "How should we carry out our work in the trade unions?" or "What are the principles on which the platform of a trade-union tendency ought to be based?" or "Do we need a fighting program for the sections? If so, what questions should be included in it?" will find very few answers in the European document. Apart from workers control there are very few transitional demands in it. The other key demand -- for a workers (and peasants) government -- is treated very superficially, although in the period ahead it can become very important for several sections. All this threatens to lead to substituting a single slogan -- workers control -- for the Transitional Program and to adopting a rather spontaneist view of building the revolutionary party (something along the lines of "Build organizations of the size of the ex-Ligue Communiste through tactical initiatives in the mass vanguard; we will build the party when there is a situation of dual power.").

This would be a very real danger if the European document were strictly applied in the elaboration of the line of our sections. We hope that many of the European sections will recognize -- consciously or not -- all the limitations of the document in this respect and pay no attention to it in elaborating their line. In our opinion, this is what the "Balance Sheet and Perspectives" document in our section did, placing all its emphasis on building a "trade-union Left" (compare, for example, the first two pages -- which correctly summarize the European document, and in which there isn't a word about trade-union work -- with all the rest).

The fact that the document takes up so few of these problems seems all the more serious to us because we believe that our entire intervention among the radicalized youth and in the working-class vanguard must be carried out within the more general framework of our strategic task.

With this in mind, we reject the concept of building the party in two stages (today the vanguard, tomorrow the masses), a concept now openly affirmed by the Mandel tendency.

It is clear that because of the very nature of our organizations we will first win the vanguard, but this vanguard must be won by proving that we have the best program, the best strategy,

the best tactics for winning the leadership of the masses and for leading their struggles to victory. The vanguard must be won by educating it about its links to the masses, otherwise it threatens to become a powerless "vanguard." (This is the whole thrust of the discussions we have with the Maoists on trade-union work.)

Lacking this approach, we fall into one that is purely "tactical" (seeing it as separated from the masses), that is, this vanguard's approach. We run the risk of becoming blind to the limitations of this vanguard, of gradually adapting to it.

This leads to the following errors:

--An abstract, propagandistic approach to the class struggle that neglects the immediate tasks: for example, the recent electoral campaign of the ex-Ligue Communiste, which was based almost exclusively around explaining the meaning of "Say no to the peaceful road to socialism," without putting forward in the campaign the transitional demands that necessarily constitute the steps toward the dictatorship of the proletariat. This propagandistic approach -- which by definition can influence only the vanguard -- is called the "line of building the organization" (in the first stage, probably).

--We made several errors of the same sort in our Chile work (a tendency to give the mobilizations a propagandistic-revolutionary character instead of responding to the immediate needs of the class struggle: defense of the Chilean workers movement). This involves errors of a more or less technical nature (the La Gauche headline, the banners and slogans in the Chile demonstration) which, although the formal platform of the front was correct, nevertheless distorted the character of the demonstration (us in the front with banner like "There's only one solution to a military putsch: popular militias" and our chants of "The only solution is revolution," followed by the Maoists: "Power comes from the barrel of a gun"). Ernest Mandel oddly enough rationalized and justified this in his reply to the open letter from N. Gerard and M. Clause. A reply along the lines of : It wasn't possible to mobilize a lot of people, so we put forward our maximum program; we didn't isolate ourselves vis-a-vis the thousands (1,500 at the most!) of young people with our slogan "The only solution is revolution!" Thus it is apparent that the masses under the reformists' control have in some strange fashion disappeared from these considerations. We think it's time to adjust our sights!

--The fact that support to the Irish revolution is totally neglected in the European document clearly represents an adaptation to ultraleftism. This can only be an indirect consequence of the fact that many of the ultraleft organizations have never understood the importance of the Irish revolution, probably because of their failure to understand the national question and the process of permanent revolution. Another example of adaptation on the same plane is the refusal to recognize the vital importance of the withdrawal of British troops and the refusal to build a mass movement in Europe around this demand.

We repeat, there is a growing tendency to neglect the objective needs of the class struggle in favor of revolutionary phraseology or adventuristic actions; in short, in favor of "the concerns of the vanguard."

We disagree on this point with Pierre Frank when, in his reply to Comrade Waters, he treats the "concerns of the vanguard" and the "objective needs of the class struggle" as though they were the same thing. IIDB, Vol. 10, No. 14, August 1973. If everything were as simple as that there would be no more ultra-lefts (with their sectarian and opportunistic deviations) and the party would probably already be built.

As we have said, "winning hegemony in the vanguard is a goal and not a tactic. The tactics for attaining this goal are hard to come up with. We've found three:

(1) The national election campaigns and their preoccupation with the "concerns of the vanguard," which we have already mentioned.

(2) "Exemplary" actions. First of all, we find this term just as confusing as "armed struggle" (which includes such totally different actions as the armed struggle led by Hugo Blanco, and the Sallustro kidnapping, or the ERP's disarming of a police officer) or "mass vanguard." The examples we have been given of exemplary actions prove this. Comrade Germain cites the SWP's activity in building the antiwar movement. Comrade Frank, on the other hand, cites the Molotov cocktails thrown at the Argentine embassy in France at the time of the Trelew massacre.

We state at the outset that we support "exemplary actions" of the Lip or Glaverbel-Gilly, etc., sort, and we have always believed that it was correct to furnish an "example" in 1965 by marching in the streets with a few Trotskyists to demand the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam.

On the other hand, we are in total disagreement with what Comrade Frank writes on "minority violence" as an "exemplary action." His position, moreover, has evolved in a rather strange way. At the International Executive Committee meeting he explained that "in France, a Molotov cocktail is nothing." Now, however, it seems that Molotov cocktails are supposed to educate the masses about revolutionary violence! We believe that the working class will reach a higher stage of class consciousness through its own experience and through the experiences in which it comes to recognize itself as a class -- not by serving as spectators at "exemplary" actions of "minority violence" by a few Trotskyists!

(3) "Unity in action--outflanking the bureaucracy." When you take into consideration the political composition of the groups that participate in this, it boils down to unity with other organizations that are known as "leftist."

It is clear that we must pursue this policy of unity in action; among other things, it is especially important in that it gives the radicalized youth their "operative" character. Otherwise we would fall into the Lambertist error of capitulation.

But we repeat, the demonstrations, etc., that we hold with the other far-left organizations must be seen as tactical operations within the framework of our strategic task. The platform on which this common work is carried out and the tactical course we follow must take into account:

--the objective needs of the class struggle;

--the state of the spirits of the masses who are under the control of the reformists, even if they don't participate. Above all, we must avoid the reaction: "There aren't very many of us; apart from us there's only the Maoists and a few Christians. Let's put forward our maximum program: The only solution is revolution."

Unity in action and united fronts with the other organizations must therefore always seek to involve the other workers organizations (the CP, the social democrats) and their rank and file. These fronts must be seen under the long-term perspective of unifying the working class around transitional demands.

We believe that our differences with the European document are too important to support it any longer. It is regrettable that an alternative -- quite different, including on the methodological plane -- will not be ready before the world congress, but we think that the discussion that has begun in Europe will lead to that in the longer run. We have the firm intention of participating in this discussion.

Finally, we would like to mention that we agree with several of the specific criticisms made by Comrade Waters on the European document, especially on anti-imperialist work (which is supposedly useful only for educating the youth when there are no workers on strike), on "women's" work, and on a youth organization.

III. The Same Methodological Error in both the Ninth World Congress Document on Latin America and the European Document.

This error consists in taking the general tendency for a continent and making it into an immediate perspective for every country instead of taking it as a framework for analyzing the different rhythms of the development of the class struggle in different countries. After the Ninth World Congress comrades believed, for example, that Latin America had entered a phase of civil war on a continental scale and in every country.

The consequence of this is that you risk imposing a single tactic (like guerrilla warfare) on every section, a tactic that then both replaces and contradicts the strategy of building a revolutionary party on the basis of the method of the Transitional Program.

IV. How Should the Fourth International Be Built?

It is clear to us that in Latin America the Fourth International has adapted to guerrillaist and Castroist concepts. Guerrilla warfare -- a tactic -- has become the substitute for a program and an (illusory) shortcut for building the party. This adaptation is equally reflected in the refusal -- stated clearly at the cadre school in Luxembourg in 1971 and still never repudiated -- to build a section in Cuba.

The same danger exists with the Vietnamese CP and the Khmer Rouge. Without making a fundamental judgment on the nature of these parties, we nonetheless think:

--that the Mandel tendency overestimated the "victory" of the

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cease-fire in Vietnam;

--overestimated the desire for a military victory in Cambodia;

--underestimated the pressure from the USSR, China, and North Vietnam on the combattants in South Vietnam and Cambodia;

--we believe that work must be done toward building sections in Indochina.

In Europe, the Mandel tendency is moving more and more in the direction of an adaptation to ultraleftism (or occasionally to the opportunism of the radicalized youth): Jebracq's general frame of mind in France; Pierre Frank's shift in position, which we have already mentioned, on the question of Molotov cocktails; Ernest Mandel's theoretical justification for the errors committed in our Chile work; all the theories about the "educational role" of "minority violence"; etc.

We believe that this reflects a more general tendency toward adaptation that has existed for a long time in the International (Yugoslavia, Algeria and the Arab regimes, the adaptation to the social democracy in Belgium during the entry period: a rightist centrism). It is clear that this is not the way to build a genuine mass International. That can only be built on the overall programmatic heritage of Trotskyism. It requires a leadership (on a national and international scale) that rigorously applies the method of scientific socialism, which is upheld solely by the Trotskyist movement. We are seeking to reaffirm what should become a common meeting ground for everyone, because the Mandel tendency remains very confused and vague in this respect after its experience with the PRT.