

14 Charles Lane
New York, NY. 10014
December 11, 1976

No. 1

To Leninist Trotskyist Faction Coordinators

Dear Comrades,

First of all, it has been suggested that we number the LTF mailings so that comrades can more easily know whether they have missed any. So we are beginning with this mailing as No. 1.

Enclosed are items relating to the October and November meetings of the United Secretariat. A full report on the October meeting is in preparation, and will be published shortly in an Internal Information Bulletin. Enclosed is:

- 1) A motion on conditions for a democratic and authoritative world congress, passed unanimously by the October United Secretariat.
- 2) A letter to the United Secretariat from Jack Barnes, Joseph Hansen, Barry Sheppard, and Mary-Alice Waters, together with three attachments.

Comradely,

Caroline Lund

UNITED SECRETARIAT MOTION ON PREPARATION FOR A DEMOCRATIC WORLD
CONGRESS, UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED.

To assure a democratic and authoritative world congress, the following additions to the resolution of the February 1976, IEC and the July 3-4 United Secretariat are agreed upon.

1. The United Secretariat takes responsibility for translating and publishing pre-world-congress documents in French and English. It also assumes responsibility for translating these documents into Spanish, but leaves responsibility for publishing and circulating them up to the Spanish-speaking sections.

In addition, the United Secretariat assumes responsibility for keeping in print bulletins that are relevant to the current discussion.

2. Line resolutions are to be translated, published and mailed to the sections by four months before the date set for the world congress.

3. The deadline for submission of line resolutions to the United Secretariat is set at six months before the date set for the world congress.

4. The deadline for submission of other contributions to the United Secretariat is four months before the date set for the world congress.

5. Translation, publication and mailing of such documents to the sections is to be completed within two months of receipt of the documents.

6. Publication of documents received after the deadlines set above cannot be guaranteed.

7. If the deadlines for handling bulletins set above are not adhered to, the world congress is to be postponed until at least three months after these conditions are met.

8. The Parity Committee will make recommendations to the United Secretariat concerning public discussion.

9. The United Secretariat will poll the International Executive Committee for its approval on the date of the world congress.

10. All sections, except those working under extremely repressive conditions, will hold congresses to elect their delegates to the world congress after discussion and vote on the line resolutions.

11. We agree that adherence to the above conditions will assure a democratic and authoritative world congress, as defined by the statutes. This involves the duty of sections and sympathizing organizations to apply world congress decisions as specified in the statutes. We agree not to propose any changes in the statutes at the world congress, but to continue to abide by the statutes adopted at the last world congress.

ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY BY: Adair, Atwood, Aubin, Capa, Celso, Claudio, Crandall, Duret, Domingo, Fourier, Frey, Galois, Georges, Johnson, Jones, Julio, Karl, Martinez, Otto, Pepe, Roman, Therese, Walter, Werner.

OTHERS PRESENT: Carmen, Petersen, Raul, Roberto, Ricardo, Stateman, Stephan, LCC

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New York, N.Y.
December 8, 1976

To the United Secretariat

Dear Comrades,

As observers at the United Secretariat meeting of October 16-17, 1976, we shared the sense of accomplishment felt by everyone there over the unanimous vote for resolutions opening the door to a united center, organizing a democratic and authoritative world congress, and clearing the way for a discussion with the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International. We felt equal satisfaction when the OCRFI on October 19 accepted the conditions laid down in the latter resolution.

Consequently, the letter to the OCRFI dated November 14, which was approved by a majority of the United Secretariat, has aroused grave concern among us. It goes against the unanimous decision of the October 17 United Secretariat meeting.

Before taking up the questions it raises, we think the letter itself calls for clarification; it is written in such an obscure way that it is difficult to determine its purpose and what it is talking about.

The context is the sustained effort of the OCRFI to open up friendly relations and a political discussion with the United Secretariat of the Fourth International despite repeated rebuffs. The OCRFI's effort led, after various ups and downs, to a meeting of representatives of the two organizations on October 19. At this meeting the United Secretariat delegation presented the resolution adopted unanimously by the United Secretariat two days previously. The text is as follows:

"We propose that the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International make parallel statements to be printed in Rouge, Informations Ouvrières and other publications of the Fourth International and the OCRFI.

"1. That the goal of the discussions is to strengthen the force of the Fourth International as a single international organisation based on the program of Trotskyism, including adherence to democratic centralism.

"2. That the United Secretariat and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire while holding deep differences with some of the positions of the OCRFI and the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste consider them to be revolutionary organisations.

"3. That the OCRFI and the OCI similarly affirm that they consider the Fourth International and its French section, the ICR, to be revolutionary organisations although they hold deep differences with some of their positions.

"In view of the agreement on these points, the United Secretariat will open an organized discussion with the OCRFI on the basis of a mutually agreed on agenda."

After some discussion on various matters, including the meaning of the three points, the delegation of the OCRFI accepted the resolution of the United Secretariat. In its statement, which it drew up in a caucus during the meeting, the OCRFI delegation first repeated the text of the resolution and then specified acceptance of it in the following terms:

"The OCRFI renews its proposal to open a discussion between the two international organizations, without any conditions or preliminary requisites, the objective being to reconstruct a united Fourth International on the basis of its founding program; in order to try to overcome the differences that were at the origin of a split that lasted for almost a quarter of a century.

"That the goal of the discussions is to strengthen the force of the Fourth International as a single international organization based on the program of Trotskyism, including adherence to democratic centralism.

"The delegation of the Organizing Committee holds that ties with the Fourth International and affirmation of the validity of its program characterize an organization as revolutionary.

"Both the United Secretariat and its sections, and the Organizing Committee and its organizations affirm the necessity for the Fourth International and the validity of its program. This characterizes both of them as revolutionary organizations."

The two delegations expressed their pleasure at having finally succeeded in overcoming the obstacles to a fraternal relationship that would make possible a mutually profitable discussion.

Proceeding in accordance with the agreement reached October 19, the OCRFI drew up an English translation of their statement for publication in its press internationally. Again in accordance with the agreement, the OCRFI submitted the draft with its English translation to the United Secretariat for approval. An accompanying letter was dated October 27, 1976.

The United Secretariat majority followed a different course. Instead of moving ahead on the basis of the agreement it had demanded the OCRFI accept, the United Secretariat majority switched its course 180 degrees. By way of justification, the United Secretariat majority contends in its November 14 letter that something new and unexpected happened, putting everything in question. The charge is formulated as follows:

"The manifold characterizations of the Fourth International, its United Secretariat, and its sections by the OCRFI and its organizations, together with the practical consequences that flow from these characterizations, have up till now been the major obstacle to any discussion. However, after the meeting between a delegation from the US of the Fourth International and a delegation from the OCRFI, after the statement made at the time of this meeting, the same sort of characterization, in a line of continuity with previous characterizations, has appeared in your official publications. The concluding paragraph of your October 1976 statement, therefore, has not cleared up the situation." (Emphasis in original.)

As can be seen, the letter charges that the OCRFI issued a new statement "in your official publications" after the October 19 meeting in which representatives of the two organizations reached the agreement indicated above. The implication is that if the statement had been issued before the October 19 meeting there would have been no cause for complaint.

As proof of the charge, several paragraphs are cited from the preface to the October issue (No. 1 of a new series) of the international information bulletin, La Correspondance Internationale, published by the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste, which adheres to the OCRFI.

The sentences in question express the view that in 1950-53, the Fourth International underwent a "destructive crisis," that this crisis has not yet been overcome, and that it "can only be overcome by the elimination from the Fourth International of revisionist positions contrary to the principles and program of the Fourth International." Without indicating the omission of three intervening paragraphs, the letter cites another sentence in the same vein in which the authors of the preface state that in their opinion the "destructive character" of the crisis in the Fourth International "resulted in its destruction as a centralized worldwide organization based on the Transitional Program."

The November 14 letter draws the following conclusion:

"The US considers that the statement by the International Bureau [of the OCRFI on the three points] does not really meet the demand formulated in Point 3 of its resolution of October 17, 1976 (i.e., 'that both the OCRFI and the OCI state that the Fourth International and its French section, the LCR, are revolutionary organizations, even though they may have deep differences with some of the positions held by the latter organizations')." (Emphasis in original.)

Furthermore, according to the letter, the OCRFI's statement as a whole is put in question: "Such ambiguity cannot but help give working-class opinion and revolutionary militants the impression that your declaration was made in the framework of an unprincipled operation."

The letter goes on: "...only a clarification from you as regards Point 3 of the US resolution in particular can clear the way for opening up a debate enabling us to see if these three criteria can be met."

The letter also appears to demand that the OCRFI say something about points one and two, although this is not at all clear: "As of now, the 'International Bureau of the OCRFI' must give an unambiguous answer to the three points of the US declaration."

* * *

On the substantive questions the November 14 letter does not stand on firm ground.

1. The allegation that the preface to the new OCI bulletin was written after the October 19 meeting is particularly weak. No attempt appears to have been made to verify the facts. The IMT members of the United Secretariat, who drew up the letter, do not appear to have even asked the OCRFI about the date.

2. It can easily be shown that the bulletin containing the preface was printed before the October 19 meeting. For instance, a copy was received in New York on October 16.

3. Long before the October 19 meeting, the United Secretariat had taken note of the views of the leaders of the OCRFI on the nature and consequences of the 1950-53 crisis in the Fourth International as well as their views on the 1963 reunification.

These opinions were considered to be no barrier to opening a discussion with the OCRFI centered on current political issues. In fact there was general acknowledgment that precisely these opinions of the OCRFI leadership would have to be included among the topics to be discussed. No demand was made on the OCRFI to give up its view in advance of a discussion. What was demanded of the OCRFI was acceptance of the three requisites that were codified in the resolution presented by the representatives of the United Secretariat at the October 19 meeting. The OCRFI accepted the three requisites. The United Secretariat delegation voiced its satisfaction. That should have closed the long chapter marked by the dragging of feet and placed everything on a more auspicious basis.

* * *

The November 14 letter sent to the OCRFI places the United Secretariat in an untenable position.

First, it is ridiculous to demand that the OCRFI reaffirm acceptance of the three points they already accepted on October 19.

If the leaders of the OCRFI take the oath a second time, what then? Will this satisfy the majority of the United Secretariat? Or will the majority demand that the OCRFI raise their right hand and solemnly swear a third and a fourth time?

Second, the majority of the United Secretariat has suddenly decided that the OCRFI's views on the "revisionism" to be found in the Fourth International contradict the OCRFI's acknowledgment that the Fourth International is a revolutionary organization.

It is the majority of the United Secretariat who are illogical. The discussion is called for because there are differences. The premise accepted by the OCRFI is that both sides should be open to persuasion. If there were no differences there would be no grounds for discussion, or trying to convince each other.

If the majority of the United Secretariat were to apply their new position logically, it would have truly drastic repercussions within the Fourth International. For instance, we have not changed our views on the destructive role played by Pablo. Others are of the same opinion, including members of the International Majority Tendency (Comrade Lequenne, for example). About half of the international holds that the famous turn at the Ninth World Congress marked a departure from Trotskyism. Leading comrades hold that the resolution on armed struggle, passed by a majority at the 1974 congress, revises the tenets of Trotskyism.

Does the majority faction propose to refuse to discuss with these comrades unless they first give up their views? Will they demand an oath to that effect? Would the majority faction demand that they repeat the oath because of the suspicion that they had their fingers crossed and thus were not really unambiguous? We trust that the demands of logic will not carry the majority faction that far.

Third, the letter deals a political blow to the Fourth International. The letter testifies to indefensible capriciousness in the conduct of negotiations. It likewise demonstrates that the United Secretariat, for whatever reason, stands in fear of opening a discussion with the OCRFI.

Fourth, the letter is evidence of the growth of sectarianism in the leading body of the Fourth International. While proclaiming a policy of seeking to unite the mighty proletarian forces required to advance the world revolution to success, the IMT demonstrates in practice that it is not even capable of welcoming the overtures of a Trotskyist current that wishes to strengthen the Fourth International. It rejects the positive course adopted by the OCRFI of seeking to overcome the years of bitter partisan polemics through a discussion that will demarcate the differences and probe the possibility of resolving them.

The least that can be said of this sorry performance is that the majority leadership of the Fourth International has in this instance shown political incompetence.

* * *

Why was such a letter written? In our opinion, the IMT has been divided on how to respond to the overtures of the OCRFI. One current, seeing the obvious advantages to be gained from accepting the positive moves of the OCRFI at face value, favored opening a dialogue and seeking to act in common in the class struggle wherever possible.

Another current, unfortunately in the majority, took a sectarian stance. It was determined to block any rapprochement. However, its leaders did not act forthrightly. In the United Secretariat they approved a course of responding positively to the advances made by the OCRFI. At the same time they adopted an extremely hostile attitude toward the OCRFI. This went so far as condemning friendly gestures to the OCRFI such as extending invitations to send observers to conventions.

In addition the majority of the IMT sought to provoke the OCRFI into moves that would blow up the efforts at rapprochement.

Another tack was to lay down conditions they felt certain the OCRFI would refuse to meet. Thus they counted on the OCRFI rejecting one or all of the demands in the resolution passed at the October 16-17 meeting of the United Secretariat. When the OCRFI, much to their surprise, accepted the demands, the majority of the IMT found themselves trapped by their own maneuver.

Instead of recognizing the damage to the Fourth International already inflicted by their unprincipled maneuvers and sectarian attitude toward the OCRFI and deciding that it would now be better to act in accordance with the positive approach approved by the United Secretariat, the majority of the IMT decided to push for an end to the attempt to establish friendly relations. This is the meaning of the November 14 letter. It is worse than previous moves because it comes after a meeting with the OCRFI in which agreement was reached.

The rationale for this course is the diehard factionalism of the IMT. The key leaders are afraid that the OCRFI might continue along the course it has begun until a fusion of forces would be feasible. If that were to occur, the IMT visualizes a bloc being formed by the Leninist Trotskyist Faction and the OCRFI. From their corner, such an outcome must be nipped in the bud at any cost!

The reality is that the LTF scorns a narrow factional outlook. From the beginning, the LTF has adhered to the principle that the

interests of the Fourth International stand above those of any faction. To build and to strengthen the Fourth International by bringing and keeping together all the forces standing on the program laid down by the founding congress, including democratic centralism, is a task that should be carried out without regard to narrowly conceived factional interests.

In this respect, it remains to be seen how the OCRFI will evolve. The organization is not monolithic. A current may exist that opposes rapprochement, particularly with the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire. It is certain, however, that a positive outcome hinges at this point on opening a fraternal discussion with the OCRFI and doing everything possible to foster and advance comradely relations with them.

In line with this, we would propose the following immediate steps:

1. To reconsider the November 14 letter. It was a blunder to approve it.
2. To resume the favorable attitude taken by the delegation of the United Secretariat toward the OCRFI's acceptance of the conditions laid down in the October 17 United Secretariat resolution on this question.
3. To open regular meetings with representatives of the OCRFI to remove possible misunderstandings that may have arisen recently or that may arise again in working to improve relations.
4. To publish in the International Internal Discussion Bulletin the preface to the first issue of La Correspondance Internationale so as to make it available to the membership of the Fourth International.
5. To likewise publish in the International Internal Discussion Bulletin the text of the statement that the OCRFI proposed to publish in line with the agreement reached at the October 19 meeting.
6. To move ahead with the discussion with the OCRFI projected in the agreement reached October 19.
7. To nominate an official United Secretariat delegation to observe the December international conference of the OCRFI. The

OCRFI has invited observers of the United Secretariat to take the floor there and say whatever they wish. This would constitute an excellent opportunity, it would seem, to present the viewpoint of the United Secretariat directly to members of the OCRFI from many countries.

Comradely yours,

Jack Barnes
Jack Barnes

Joseph Hansen
Joseph Hansen

Barry Sheppard
Barry Sheppard

Mary-Alice Waters
Mary-Alice Waters

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TRANSLATION

TRANSLATION

TRANSLATION

United Secretariat of the Fourth International

to the "Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International"

Comrades,

Attached to the letter of October 27, 1976, the United Secretariat (US) has received the statement of the "International Bureau of the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International" (OCRFI).

The US considers that the statement by the International Bureau does not really meet the demand formulated in Point 3 of its resolution of October 17, 1976 (i.e., "that both the OCRFI and the OCI state that the Fourth International and its French section, the ICR, are revolutionary organizations, even though they may have deep differences with some of the positions held by the latter organizations"). This failure in fact to meet our demand is illustrated by the following facts. The manifold characterizations of the Fourth International, its United Secretariat, and its sections, by OCRFI and its organizations, together with the practical consequences that flow from these characterizations, have up till now been the major obstacle to any discussion. However, after the meeting between a delegation from the US of the Fourth International and a delegation from OCRFI, after the statement made at the time of this meeting, the same sort of characterization, in a line of continuity with previous characterizations, has appeared in your official publications. The concluding paragraph of your October 1976 statement, therefore, has not cleared up the situation. In fact, in a document dated October 1976, you state the following:

"Crisis of the Fourth International? We think that in 1950-1953 the Fourth International suffered a destructive crisis, marked first by the arbitrary expulsion of the majority of the French section, and then in 1953 by a split in the Fourth International on a world scale, with the formation of the International Committee including, notably, the SWP, along with the English, French, Swiss, and Chinese sections.

"The destructive character of this crisis arose from the fact that it was provoked by an offensive against the principles and program of the Fourth International by a revisionist current that formed in the very center of the International, in its leadership.

"We think that this crisis has not been overcome, that it can only be overcome by the elimination from the Fourth International of revisionist positions contrary to the principles and program of the Fourth International. This cannot be accomplished by diplomatic niceties or administrative procedures but by drawing a balance sheet of the history of the Fourth International

and its crisis, in relation with the problems that have arisen in the course of the class struggle itself.

"If we judge that the crisis of the Fourth International had a destructive character, this is above all because the blows dealt by the revisionists to the international organization founded by Leon Trotsky resulted in its destruction as a centralized worldwide organization based on the Transitional Program."

(Introductory note to the October 1976 issue of Correspondance Internationale, the international bulletin of the OCI. Our emphasis.)

Such ambiguity cannot but help give working-class opinion and revolutionary militants the impression that your declaration was made in the framework of an unprincipled operation.

In fact, the concluding paragraph of your declaration does not involve any explicit clarification as regards the type of statements quoted above. Therefore, not only do such statements contradict it but they deprive of any value your statement (which relates to Point 1 in the US resolution) that "the aim of discussions is to strengthen the Fourth International as a united international organization based on the program of Trotskyism, which involves accepting democratic centralism."

A clear position on the latter point remains a prerequisite for any discussion between our organizations, just as does OCRFI characterizing the Fourth International as a whole as revolutionary.

In our opinion, discussion whose aim is to "strengthen the Fourth International as a united organization based on the program of Trotskyism, which involves accepting democratic centralism," assumes not only a programmatic agreement and the acceptance of democratic centralism but also the possibility for unity in action in the ongoing class struggle between all sections and sympathizing organizations of the Fourth International and the organizations adhering to the OCRFI.

In line with this, only a clarification from you as regards Point 3 of the US resolution in particular can clear the way for opening up a debate enabling us to see if these three criteria can be met. As of now, the "International Bureau of the OCRFI" must give an unambiguous answer to the three points of the US declaration.

In conclusion, the US considers the position taken publicly by the Political Bureau and Central Committee of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (French section of the Fourth International) with regard to the attacks by OCI members on members of the LOR and of the LCR in Amiens on October 20, 1976, to be perfectly justified.

Revolutionary greetings,

United Secretariat of the Fourth International

Statement of OCRFI .

The delegation of the International Bureau, mandated by the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International, after a discussion with the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, considered the following resolution adopted by the United Secretariat :

We propose that the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International make parallel statements to be printed in Rouge, Informations Ouvrières and other publications of the Fourth International and the OCRFI.

- 1- That the goal of the discussions is to strengthen the force of the Fourth International as a single international organization based on the program of Trotskyism, including adherence to democratic centralism.
- 2- That the United Secretariat and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire while holding deep differences with some of the positions of the OCRFI and the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste consider them to be revolutionary organizations.
- 3- That the OCRFI and the OCI similarly affirm that they consider the Fourth International and its French section the LCR to be revolutionary organizations although they hold deep differences with some of their positions.

In view of the agreement of these points, the United Secretariat will open an organized discussion with the OCRFI on the basis of a mutually agreed on agenda.

The OCRFI renews its proposal to open a discussion between the two international organizations, without any conditions or preliminary requisites, the objective being to reconstruct a united Fourth International on the basis of its founding program ; in order to try to overcome the differences that were at the origin of a split that lasted for almost a quarter of a century.

That the goal of the discussions is to strengthen the force of the Fourth International as a single international organisation based on the program of Trotskyism, including adherence to democratic centralism.

The delegation of the Organizing Committee holds that ties with the Fourth International and affirmation of the validity of its program characterize an organization as revolutionary.

Both the United Secretariat and its sections, and the Organizing Committee and its organizations affirm the necessity for the Fourth International and the validity of its program. This characterizes both of them as revolutionary organizations.

[The following is a translation from La Correspondance internationale (international bulletin of the OCI of France) no. 1, October 1976.]

PREFACE

La Correspondance internationale [International Correspondence] will appear hereafter as an international information bulletin published under the auspices of the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste [Internationalist Communist Organization], an organization belonging to the Comité d'organisation pour la reconstruction de la IV^e Internationale [Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International].

Our goal is to have this bulletin appear regularly as a monthly. In this way we intend to regularly provide OCI militants, and all those who follow our activities or are associated with us, the information they need about the activities of organizations affiliated to the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International, and about problems and discussions that arise in the course of the activities of these organizations, as well as about the issues being debated more generally within organizations and currents that claim adherence to the Fourth International.

At the same time, La Correspondance internationale will continue to serve as the forum for publishing in French the political documents drawn up by the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International on the basis of its discussions. In order to accomplish this task, supplements or special issues will be published as the need arises. But parallel to this, we thought it was essential to make known as widely as possible some of the various aspects of the struggle to reconstruct the Fourth International, without waiting for documents to be drawn up on these questions by a meeting of the International Bureau.

This need arises from the way in which the struggle to reconstruct the Fourth International is progressing -- which is primarily expressed by the life and the activity of the Organizing Committee -- and from the OCI's responsibilities in this struggle.

From this standpoint, the decision by the OCI's Central Committee to publish an international information bulletin answers to the needs of the political campaign whose thrust is indicated in the letter addressed by the OCI to the readers of Informations Ouvrières [Workers News] to activists, workers, and youth.

Therefore, since the revolutionary actions of the Spanish workers foreshadow upheavals that will have immense impact on the world working-class struggle, in the next issue of this bulletin we will publish the documents adopted by the conference of the Spanish Trotskyist group, Fourth International, which is affiliated with the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International.

In the December issue we will try to draw the political lessons of the November 13-14, 1976 symposia on the political revolution, at which the discussion begun in March with Leonid Plyushch, Jiri Pelikan and Jan Kavan will be carried forward and broadened.

In this first issue we are publishing a balance sheet of the positions taken by the United Secretariat on the Portuguese revolution.

It was necessary to draw an initial balance sheet here for several reasons. In the first place, new problems are being brought to the fore by the advance of the class struggle in Europe, whose axis and direction, as we have stressed, is indicated by the Portuguese revolution. Or rather, in various forms the fundamental problems of revolutionary strategy and tactics are being posed anew. In line with this, it is indispensable to try to grasp the essential lessons of the period we have gone through and not let these be forgotten.

Furthermore, in a document adopted in February 1976, the United Secretariat has itself drawn a balance sheet of sorts on its orientation in the period following April 1974. This is why La Correspondance internationale is publishing unrevised a discussion article completed shortly before the Portuguese presidential elections. The fruitless attempt to run a "revolutionary" candidate, as well as the divisions that appeared subsequently within the United Secretariat majority (and the majority of the French LCR), with some asserting that a vote for Carvalho had the same significance as one for Pato, while others (Alain Krivine, for example) openly called for a vote for Pato in disregard of any class criterion, were the result of basic positions that had crystallized previously in response to the Portuguese revolution. A postscript would not modify our conclusion.

Having said this much--since this article represents a contribution to a debate we believe to be necessary-- we must specify in what framework the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International places this discussion.

WHY A DISCUSSION?

It has now been three years since we in the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International asked the United Secretariat of the Fourth International to be allowed to participate in the discussion for the Tenth World Congress that it was preparing to hold. The Organizing Committee got the brush-off.

The Tenth World Congress has since been held. But it did not even temporarily resolve the problems before it nor remove the grounds for the Organizing Committee's proposal.

Since then, most importantly, the class struggle on an international level has scored such advances that we are obliged to speak of a turn in the world situation.

This turn was expressed by the opening of the proletarian revolution in Portugal and by the defeat of imperialism in Vietnam, an event of worldwide importance. This turn is reflected also in the accelerated breakdown of the world market. The various facets of the economic downturn are being promoted by the generalized political crisis of the bourgeoisie's methods of rule, and they themselves are becoming factors aggravating this political crisis.

This turn in the world situation is occurring in the context of the phase in the class struggle whose features became clear in 1968. Marked by an imperialist defeat of worldwide importance, and by the fact that the proletarian revolution came onto the agenda in Europe in general and actually began in Portugal, this phase of the class struggle is moving toward a multiplying of revolutionary situations in which the question of power will directly be posed.

The OCI does not see the problems and crisis of the Fourth International in separation from the demands posed by this situation. (The theses adopted in 1972 by the 17th congress of the OCI stressed, "There is no doubt that the crisis confronting the Fourth International and the crisis of the workers movement dominated by Stalinism and reformism, are one and the same problem.")

It is in accordance with such a perspective that the OCI assesses the difficulties it encounters on the road to achieving an organized discussion that will make it possible to overcome this crisis. This is why we are not worried about personal or prestige considerations, or by the ups and downs that mark this process.

This is why, without raising any prerequisites or conditions, we have repeated our proposals for a discussion and taken numerous initiatives to facilitate opening such a discussion.

Perhaps at the outset it is necessary to give a resume of our basic positions.

What do we mean by a crisis in the Fourth International? We think that in 1950-1953 the Fourth International experienced a destructive crisis that was marked above all by the arbitrary expulsion of the majority of the French section, and later in 1953 by a split throughout the Fourth International worldwide, in which the International Committee, made up in particular of the SWP and the English, French, Swiss and Chinese sections, was formed.

This crisis was given its destructive character by the fact that it was provoked by an offensive against the principles and program of the Fourth International by a revisionist current that formed in the very center of the International, within its leadership.

We believe that this crisis has not yet been overcome, and that it can only be overcome by the elimination from the Fourth International

of revisionist positions contrary to its principles and program. This aim cannot be achieved by diplomatic arrangements or by administrative procedures, but by drawing a balance sheet of the history of the Fourth International and of its crisis as this relates to the pressing problems raised by the development of the class struggle itself.

In a discussion with the United Secretariat delegation, we were asked "What is your objective?" An OCI representative replied:

"Reconstructing the Fourth International on a principled basis, and we believe there are currents alien to the Transitional Program within the United Secretariat. There is no question of any splitting operation. If our objective were a split, we would know how to bring one about. What we want is discussion leading toward the reconstruction of the Fourth International, the instrument bequeathed by Trotsky, which was reconstituted in 1943-47 and destroyed in 1950-1953 by Pablo and Pabloism."

Reconstructing the Fourth International? Yes, a unified Fourth International must be reconstructed on the basis of its founding program, the Transitional Program, as a leading center functioning in accordance with the norms of democratic centralism.

If we consider that the crisis of the Fourth International has had a destructive character, that is above all because the blows dealt by revisionism to the international organization founded by Leon Trotsky have led to its destruction as an organization centralized internationally on the basis of the Transitional Program.

To take one example that the class struggle has brought to the fore, no one denies that all the organizations and currents of the workers movement have had to respond to the problems posed by the Portuguese revolution.

On this subject we wrote in the report adopted by the Twentieth Congress of the OCI:

"All the organizations and currents of the workers movement are confronted with the problems raised by the course of the Portuguese revolution. No one can escape this test or avoid taking a position.

"In 1936-37 the Spanish revolution played a similar role. With incomparable clarity, the flame of the revolution illuminated the opposing positions within the workers movement. As early as July 27, 1936, Leon Trotsky wrote in a letter to the International Secretariat of the movement for the Fourth International: 'The question of the Popular Front is now posed with absolute clarity before all the workers.' Since the revolution posed them in terms that were crucial and urgent for the future of the Spanish proletariat--and for the world proletariat--all the questions of revolutionary principles,

strategy and tactics demanded unequivocal answers. The cleavages that took place at that time were to prove fundamental in the formation of the Fourth International itself.

"But this analogy must not lead us to forget the essential differences between the periods. The revolutionary upsurge of 1936, which culminated in Spain, took place in a period of the class struggle marked by terrible defeats for the proletariat, the responsibility for which was borne by those who led the workers movement, in particular the Stalinist leadership of the degenerated Communist International serving the counterrevolutionary interests of the Kremlin bureaucracy. The beginning of the proletarian revolution in Portugal heralds the dawn of a new phase of the world proletarian revolution. At the same time the onset of this revolution is itself the result of profound changes within the world working class, initiated by the revolutionary upsurge of the proletariat that marked the conclusion of the Second World War.

"But the course of the class struggle is not mechanically predetermined. The counterattack made by the workers under the extremely difficult political conditions following the crushing of the German working class and its organizations, which culminated after the French general strike of June 1936 in the Spanish revolution, opened up new perspectives. Under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, the organizations that were fighting for the Fourth International, which had just held the 'first international conference for the Fourth International' in July 1936, threw all their forces into the battle.

"And at the international level, this battle was fought in a centralized way.

"The organizations that were acting to form a new international, the Fourth International, were for the most part numerically weak. They had to confront the counterrevolutionary frenzy of Stalinism within the workers movement. Their cadres were often inexperienced. Their organizations were at times torn apart; splits took place even at the national level. Nonetheless, the international leadership acted as a genuine political center, not simply an administrative or organizational framework. In relation to the vital problems of revolution and counterrevolution, Trotskyist politics were ONE....

"In 1974-75 from this point of view the situation was totally different. A whole gamut of organizations and tendencies claimed adherence to Trotskyism, sometimes without even formally adhering to the founding program of the Fourth International. They held the most contradictory positions on the central problems of revolution and counterrevolution. Organizations that claimed to speak and act in the name of Trotskyism pursued an orientation and carried out a type of work thoroughly contrary to the most elementary teachings of Leon Trotsky.

"This fact confirms the political conclusion that was the basis for forming the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International: the blows dealt to the Fourth International after the crisis of 1950-1953 have led to the destruction of the Fourth International as a centralized world organization based on the Transitional Program. The revisionists were not able to destroy the Fourth International as a program. Its political continuity has been preserved throughout the struggle at the national and international levels by Trotskyist organizations that have defended the program and the gains of the Trotskyist movement...."

Let us add that the importance of the Portuguese revolution consists in the fact that it is not an isolated, Western phenomenon but is both the highest political expression at this stage, and at the same time a component part, of a combined movement. Placing the proletarian revolution on the agenda in Europe, it constitutes an axis indicating the direction that the struggles of the world working-class, particularly the European proletariat, are going to take. It also constitutes a political force impelling the proletariat toward revolution.

The Portuguese revolution takes place in a world situation in which we see coming together in Spain all the elements of an open revolutionary crisis that is going to have incalculable consequences for the entire "European order," a world situation in which the crisis of bourgeois rule in the major European countries is deepening, while the Stalinist bureaucracy, caught in a vise between fundamental class forces, is itself on the road to explosive crises. Already the contradictions opening up in the bureaucracy are cracking and weakening its international apparatus.

To put it in different terms, the international situation we have described can be characterized as one in which the bases of the world order established at Yalta are in the process of collapsing, while the international political relationships inherited from that former equilibrium still survive but are in crisis.

In a more profound sense, assessing this situation as it is reflected on the level of political relationships, and the relationship of forces within the working class, we might say that new relationships are tending to be established between the masses, the militants and the counterrevolutionary apparatuses that are subordinated to imperialism.

In The Third International after Lenin, Trotsky remarked that "politics seen as a mass historic force always lags behind the economy." By that he meant that there is always a lag between the objective foundations of a historical epoch--or even of a period in the class struggle--and their expression in social processes as a whole, in the activity of millions of people. The period of the class struggle that opened in 1968 is characterized by the OCI as one in which all the

features and tendencies of the imperialist era are coming to their full maturity.

It is a period marked by a tendency for the class struggle to return to its basic forms, and a tendency for the international working class to regroup on new axes.

More precisely this is a period which, far from making the principles, method and strategic line of the Transitional Program of the Fourth International "outmoded," on the contrary gives them their full meaning. Mobilizing the masses to take power through transitional demands that lead "inevitably to one and only one conclusion," the conquest of power by the proletariat, is the very key to the entire present international situation.

That is why a discussion of strategic and tactical problems, the workers united front, the workers and peasants government, and the concrete application of these slogans in each country, is so vitally needed and why this goes hand in hand with the need for drawing a balance sheet of the crisis in the Fourth International.

Beyond a doubt, the advance of the international class struggle offers great opportunities for the Trotskyist organizations.

However, the international document adopted by the Twentieth Congress of the OCI pointed out: "as a conscious expression of an unconscious process, the program and political action based on the program are indispensable to realize the full possibilities of this period."

The opening up of this new period in the class struggle has exacerbated the unresolved crisis of the Fourth International. Every organization and current has had to follow the implications of its orientations to the end and apply this orientation to the vital questions of the class struggle.

By itself, the objective situation has not, and could not, resolve the differences existing between different organizations, as well as within the United Secretariat itself. On the contrary, it has confirmed the importance of these differences and clarified what they involve.

In our opinion, the reason for the new splits and continuing fragmentation can be found in the continued presence of revisionist positions within organizations adhering to the Fourth International. This process can only be halted by an organized political discussion that would go to the root of the positions that run counter to Trotskyism, positions that emerge all the more clearly as everyone is obliged to confront the most burning questions of the class struggle.