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New York, N.Y. 10014

Nov. 27, 1973

To the Steering Committee of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed are copies of two letters: 1) a letter from Comrade Jaber of Lebanon to Gus Horowitz. Comrade Jaber's letter was written in reply to Gus Horowitz's October 24 letter to him, which you have already received; and 2) a reply to Jaber's letter by Gus Horowitz.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice

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Beirut  
November 1, 1973

Dear Gus,

I have received your letter yesterday, with the issues of IP and Militant where the interview was published. We had used, a few days ago, the issue of Militant the cover of which is entitled "Stop Nixon's war drive" for a panel at the American University, that had a certain success, especially among American students.

As for the problem you raise in your letter:

- I remember very clearly that I have told you -- on our way coming from the airport and as an answer to your question about my position -- that I had stated my agreement with the Majority tendency.

- It is true, notwithstanding, that I had not yet had the time to achieve my study of all the texts of the debate (which are so numerous!). But the main question is not to agree with a certain number of lines and documents, as you seem to believe, but to agree with the general line which may be found through the documents of the majority.

I may have, and I do have, as any adherent to the Majority tendency (which is not a monolith), some disagreement about certain formulations or even certain opinions expressed by this or that member of the tendency -- but, nevertheless, I find myself in a general agreement with the conception of (revolutionary!) party building defended by the Majority, that I consider to be the truly Leninist one.

- It is true that I had not read the statement which bears my signature. But there is no reason at all to conclude from it what you say about a presumed "secret faction", "sub-committee" and the like. In fact, I received a phone call from Europe asking me if I agree to put my signature on a new statement of the Majority, related to the declaration of the Minority faction. I asked for a delay, and after discussing the point with Sami and the comrades locally, we decided to answer positively -- which was done through a second phone call. As you see, there is no secret "sub-committee" delegated with any authority...this is for the formal point of view.

- About my non-reading of the document, before putting my signature on it, it was dictated by reasons of time. However, it is our right to sign a statement even without reading it, if we have political confidence in its authors; we remain free to change our mind and declare it, if we discover that our confidence was unjustified. And I do not think that questions of "tone" are relevant in this field.

- Finally, about the "rumors" concerning the SWP convention, the fact that I did not discuss the point with you does not mean at all that I had no opinion (and allow me, please, to have personal opinions without being "reached by rumors"). Moreover, I was not convinced at all -- to say the least -- by your arguing about the allowance of speaking time to everybody, to justify the absolute and relative decrease in the number of delegates at your convention. This argument is not serious indeed. The SWP is perhaps the first party in history to decide a decrease in the absolute number of its convention delegates, while increasing its

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ranks...and this, in the name of democracy!

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We shall try our best to send you articles about the local situation, the most oftenly possible.

I shall soon achieve the revision of your translation of the draft resolution on Arab revolution and send you the corrections.

Fraternally,  
s/Jaber

Excerpt from a letter of Nov. 27, 1973, from Gus Horowitz to Jaber of Lebanon:

Dear Jaber,

As for the substantive matter raised in our recent correspondence: namely, the procedures of the IEC Majority in submitting documents. To avoid any misunderstanding, I wish to emphasize that my criticism on this score was not directed at you personally, but at the central leadership of the IEC Majority. I insist that the procedure they followed in regard to the document "Let's Discuss Political Differences, Not Old Wives Tales" was improper. Your letter confirms this assessment, in my opinion. Of course it was your right to agree in a telephone conversation to sign this document, even though you had not seen it in advance. The point I should like to emphasize is that it was improper for the leaders of the IEC Majority to ask you to do such a thing. And I rather suspect that you are not the only one who was asked to do so.

It is true that the Trotskyist concept of agreement with a document is agreement with the general political line, not necessarily with every individual point in the document. But what is the general line of the IEC Majority's "Let's Discuss..." document? Its main content consists of two elements: 1) A reply to the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction declaration. Now, the LTF declaration has introduced a new issue into the discussion -- criticism of the organizational abuses of some members of the IEC Majority. At the time that the IEC Majority was trying to get signatures to its "Let's Discuss..." document, the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction declaration had not yet been published. I think it is therefore safe to assume that the LTF declaration had not yet been read by many (perhaps most) of the members of the IEC Majority Tendency at the time they were asked to reject it. I doubt that your case is unique. 2) A series of specific criticisms of the LTF and the SWP on organizational matters, which some and perhaps most of the members of the IEC Majority Tendency could have had no opportunity to check on (if they had, perhaps some might have hesitated in associating themselves with some of the clearly unwarranted accusations in the document -- on the Canadian LSA/LSO or the SWP convention, for example).

Is it proper to ask comrades to sign such a document sight unseen, especially when it is a document written in reply to another document which was also unavailable at the time? I think not.

Nor is it proper to ask comrades to sign political documents, sight unseen, if the general line has not previously been discussed and agreement reached. The Leninist-Trotskyist Faction certainly does not proceed in that way. That is why you see most of the documents submitted to the discussion in the name of one or a few individual comrades, not the LTF as a whole.



What happened is just as I had surmised in my earlier letter to you. A subcommittee of the IEC Majority has been delegated with the authority to write and submit documents in the name of the IEC Majority as a whole. To be sure, they probably do obtain such authority via telephone, personal conversation, or letter.

This procedure would be proper under four conditions: 1) that these documents deal with issues that have already been discussed by the IEC Majority and on which general agreement has been reached; 2) that the entire world movement be informed that there exists such a subcommittee (or "steering committee") empowered with that authority; 3) that the world movement be informed about who are the members of this steering committee; 4) that the world movement be informed about any other aspects of the structure of the group calling itself the IEC Majority Tendency.

The way in which the IEC Majority has proceeded in regard to these matters is not proper. The delegation of authority to a subcommittee is one of the marks of a faction as distinct from an ideological tendency. The fact that the IEC Majority "Tendency" acts in this way while still denying that it is organized as a faction is improper. The fact that it still keeps secret from the world movement the information about which comrades compose its leadership subcommittee is improper under any circumstances. The Leninist-Trotskyist Faction does not act in that secret manner behind the backs of the FI.

While I am on the question of proper procedure, there is another question that has crossed my mind. Two new political documents -- one on China and the other on the world political situation -- have also been submitted to the discussion in the name of the entire IEC Majority Tendency. These documents deal with very complex political issues and theoretical questions, many of which are new to the discussion. The IEC Majority had not previously been founded around these issues. Does the publication of these new documents indicate that the entire IEC Majority has had a lot of internal discussion among itself and reached prior agreement on these questions? Or has some leadership subcommittee also been delegated to submit these important documents in the name of the "Tendency" as a whole?

I raise these questions not only because I think they are important in themselves, but also because they come to my mind in connection with something you say in your letter. You say, "But the main question is not to agree with a certain number of lines and documents, as you seem to believe, but to agree with the general line which may be found through the documents of the majority."

I'm not sure if I understand exactly what you mean here. According to the Trotskyist tradition of principled politics, the general political line of any tendency or faction can be defined only by specific documents which form the political basis of that tendency or faction. As far as the IEC Majority is concerned, this political line originally consisted of the following: 1) the December 3, 1972, statement of 19 IEC members; the document by Ernest Germain, "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International" and the tendency statement attached to it; the general line of the documents on Argentina, Bolivia, and Europe adopted at the December 1972 IEC meeting. Since then, the IEC Majority as a whole has adopted additional documents: a new document on Argentina; a document on armed struggle in Latin America;

a world political resolution; a document on China; and an answer to the declaration of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction.

Two points must be clear: First, to adhere to the IEC Majority requires agreement with the general line of every single one of those documents. Second, agreement with all of the above documents does not presuppose agreement on new questions not covered in the above -- for example, women's liberation, the Arab revolution, Ireland, or the United States. Disagreement has been expressed in the International on all of these questions, but these do not yet form the explicit basis for tendency or faction formation.

It is worth noting two symmetrical errors of an unprincipled nature that should not be made: 1) Adhering to one or another tendency or faction, while disagreeing with the general line of one or more documents that form the basis for such a tendency or faction; 2) Assuming a priori agreement within the tendency or faction as a whole on new issues which have not yet been agreed upon in the basic documents of the tendency or faction. I assume that the statement you made in your letter does not mean that you are falling into the latter error.

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You also mentioned that questions of "tone" were not relevant in regard to the procedure we were discussing. While it is true that "tone" does not take precedence over general political line, nevertheless, it is an important question for the world movement right now. We are going through a very serious political discussion, in which the political differences are very deep and are deepening, and in which substantial organizational questions have also been raised. Things have reached the point that splits have occurred in several sections and sympathizing organizations. In its "Recommendations to the Delegates of the Coming World Congress," (IIDB Vol. X, No. 15) the United Secretariat has had to deal with the fear that has been voiced that the differences in the International could lead to a split in the International itself. The United Secretariat agreed unanimously that it wanted to counteract this danger. The unanimous recommendations that it makes to the world congress are an important step in this regard.

But it is also important that both sides attempt to comport themselves in accord with the spirit of these recommendations, as well as observing the letter of the provisions themselves. It is therefore important, I think, that the tone of the international discussion be such as not to exacerbate the danger of a split. I'm sure you can see how easy it might be for things to get out of hand if an unnecessarily factional tone were set. Immature or irresponsible comrades on either side might feel that it was permissible to wink at the United Secretariat recommendations, while taking their real guidelines from the tone of the documents concerned. In my opinion, the tone of the document "Let's Discuss Political Differences, Not Old Wives Tales" sets an unfortunate example, and is in sharp contrast to the tone of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction declaration. It is disquieting to see a document like "Let's Discuss..." appear after the unanimous agreement of the United Secretariat on recommendations to the world congress.

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Finally, in regard to the specific criticism you raise in regard to the SWP convention. You say, "The SWP is perhaps the

first party in history to decide a decrease in the absolute number of its convention delegates, while increasing its ranks... and this, in the name of democracy!"

Perhaps you are unaware of the facts in this matter. Here is a statistical table from our past four conventions, which indicates the size of the conventions and the number of delegates who had speaking rights. This includes full delegates (elected from the branches; they have decisive vote) and fraternal delegates (National Committee members, international guests, and some others, with voice but only consultative vote).

Total attendance	1973	1971	1969	1967
at the convention	<u>1,435</u>	<u>1,107</u>	<u>600</u>	<u>367</u>
Total delegates with voice	137	189	133	113 (approx)
Full delegates	(75)	(113)	(71)	(55) (approx)
Fraternal delegates	(62)	(76)	(62)	(58) (approx)

As you can readily see, the rapid growth of the SWP necessitated careful consideration of the delegate representation formula which determines the number of delegates. At the 1971 convention, the number of delegates was extraordinarily large -- so large that the time for delegates who wanted to speak was cut down several times during the convention. Fewer than half the elected delegates were able to take the floor even a single time during the entire 1971 convention to express their point of view.

If we had not changed the delegate representation formula, we would have faced the same problem -- only in greatly exacerbated form, cutting across our goal of having the most democratic possible discussion. Democracy at a convention requires, among other things, that the delegates have time to express their views.

Rather than being the first party in history to change its delegate representation formula, this is an experience that all parties go through as they grow. Naturally, the goal is not to decrease the absolute number of delegates, but rather to prevent the number of delegates from reaching such a large size that discussion is curtailed. We learned from the experience of 1971 and brought down the total number of delegates to a more realistic level -- though it was still larger than in 1969 and 1967. In fact, the number of delegates at our 1973 convention was larger than at any previous convention in the past 25 years -- with the exception of the 1971 convention!

Even with our changed delegate representation formula, the problem of 137 delegates with voice was a real one. We allotted four full days for discussion of international questions. Even so, on every international question, there were delegates (probably 10-20) who had their hands raised, but did not get a chance to speak because the time was up -- despite the fact that the time allotted for each speaker had to be cut down from ten minutes to seven on almost every point in order to enable more delegates to speak. We didn't think it was wise to cut down the speaking time for each delegate below seven minutes, because, as you know, a speaker needs a few minutes to develop his or her point.

Just imagine what the situation would have been if the number of delegates had been larger!

Furthermore, we did everything possible to maximize the opportunity for the supporters of the IEC Majority in the SWP to have

their views heard. They were given reporting time equal to that of the Political Committee reporter on all four international questions, as well as on the question of American politics. They were allowed to name non-delegates as their reporters, even though this is not the usual practice in the SWP. They took advantage of this opportunity in three out of five of their reports (for one report, they named Comrade Maitan as their reporter). During the discussion period I think that their delegates were called on almost every time they raised their hands. As a result, although they represented only about 7.5% of the party membership, and had 4% of the elected delegates from the party branches, they had 50% of the total time allotted for reports, while on the floor, 26% of all those who spoke on international questions represented their point of view! (This latter figure includes both full and fraternal delegates who spoke.)

Given these facts, I do not see how anyone can challenge the democratic nature of the SWP convention. However, if you have any suggestions on how we could have done better, we will be glad to hear them.

Best regards,  
s/Gus