

June 30, 1964

To the Political Committee:

Dear Comrades,

On June 7th, 1964, by a vote of 507 to 179 the LSSP decided to enter the bankrupt bourgeois Bandaranaike Government. N.M. Perera and two other MPs took ministerial posts in the government. Other prominent leaders like Colvin De Silva and Leslie Goonewardena supported the action.

Never before in the whole history of our world movement has such an act of betrayal taken place. It is almost inconceivable that a party affiliated with an international formation which calls itself the Fourth International and claims to be Trotskyist should take such a step twenty four years after the death of Leon Trotsky. Every Trotskyist in the world must investigate this development thoroughly and seek to understand what led up to this betrayal and the role of the international movement in this betrayal. Only such a thorough investigation can prevent the complete liquidation of the movement founded by Leon Trotsky.

We feel it is more than a coincidence that the only substantial Trotskyist group to support Pabla in 1953 was the LSSP which now has gone completely over to the camp of the class enemy. The evolution of the LSSP is no new development. For a number of years now the LSSP has devoted itself almost totally to opportunist parliamentary activity and has compromised itself in its relations with the "liberal" bourgeois forces represented by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) of Bandaranaike. But the Pabloite International Secretariat and its successor the "United" Secretariat said as little as possible about these developments keeping the international cadres in the dark. Here in the SWP there has not been a single report to the membership on the Ceylonese situation for at least seven years.

More recently the "United" Secretariat sought to compromise the struggle within the LSSP through support of the center DeSilva-Goonewardena group rather than supporting the principled opposition led by Edmund Samavakkody. It fully supported the LSSP's organization of a "United Left Front" (ULF) with the Krushchevist CP and the MEP (a renegade group which broke away from the LSSP under the leadership of Philip Gunewardena some years back). It summarized its position in a call for a government of the ULF.

However the ULF is a coalition with two groups neither of which has broken from bourgeois politics. The Krushchevist CP has supported in the most servile fashion the bourgeoisie in Ceylon in line with the international policies of the Kremlin. The MEP has participated in an earlier Bandaranaike government and has been noted in Ceylon for its chauvinist position on the Sinhalese-only question. The platform of the ULF did not require a break from bourgeois politics from either of these groups but rather was devoted to reformist demands only slightly to the left of the Bandaranaike government. It supported a Sinhalese-only position and excluded from the coalition the Pro-Chinese split-off from the CP. With such a program a ULF government could in no way be different from the present SLFP government. That is it would content itself with a few minor reforms as it administered the state in the interests of the capitalist class.

The "United" Secretariat's call for a ULF government has nothing whatever to do with our transitional demand for a "Worker's and Farmer's Government." The Transitional Program envisions such a government as having a socialist program of expropriation of the expropriators and therefore being really an anti-capitalist government. Such a government

would be supported by the extraparliamentary organization of the working class for armed struggle and would only be a short interim prior to the establishment of a genuine workers state based on workers councils which would destroy the old bourgeois state apparatus from top to bottom. Only such a government could a Bolshevik party participate in. The ULF program and activity has nothing in common with such an approach nor did the U.S. urge anything like this upon the LSSP and the ULF.

At the actual conference of the LSSP the DeSilva-Goonewardene group—supported up to the last minute by the U.S. — offered only the meekest of opposition to Perera and then capitulated totally to him. This capitulation was inevitable as this center formation had long ago abandoned a working class revolutionary program and outlook. At the last minute the U.S. swung its support to the Edmund Samarakoddy group as it was left with no other choice. This last minute action in no sense absolved the U.S. of its full responsibility for this betrayal. Its own slogan of a ULF government had paved the way for the direct capitulation of the LSSP to the bourgeoisie.

The world Trotskyist movement will hold the SWP also responsible for the capitulation of the LSSP until such time as the SWP publically disassociates itself from the whole line of its international co-thinkers in the U.S. for the whole past period.

For our part we welcome the split of the Samarakoddy group from the Perera-led LSSP and wish them the greatest success in their struggle to build a real-revolutionary party in Ceylon. We are sure they will reevaluate Pabloism in the light of its treacherous role in Ceylon and come to the same political conclusion that we have here.

The betrayal of the LSSP follows shortly upon the suspension from the IEC of four representatives of the Pabloite faction of the U.S. and the inevitable split such an action must entail. It is reported that some 15% of the Pabloite forces prior to reunification (and prior to the break with the LSSP) is involved in this split. These forces were by no means insignificant for the U.S. Pablo had for a while the majority of the French section and thus must have split with close to half of that group. He also took with him the Dutch, Algerian, Australian, Peruvian sections and a number of minority formations. Needless to say none of these groups are sizable but outside of the LSSP and our party, which is in political solidarity with the U.S., there are no sizable groups in the U.S. Most important of all this split was led by Michel Pablo, the secretary of the Fourth International for the whole postwar period. The evolution of this figure in itself is of extreme importance to the world movement.

In true fashion the party leadership here in no way has prepared the party rank and file for this development. Only after the split is a fait accompli. The party leadership issued some of the discussion material involved.

In our opinion Pablo's evolution to his present appallingly liquidationist political positions — positions it is difficult to characterize as even centrist — is but the logical outcome of the whole method of Pabloite revisionism. Pablo today is moving towards total liquidation into the national bourgeoisie of the colonial countries and its Krushchevist allies just as Mestre, Lawrence, Clarke and Cochran moved towards liquidationism in 1953. Perera, DeSilva and Goonewardene followed out the same logic in Ceylon. Are we expected to believe that all these developments are mere "exceptions" and are not the logical outcome of the revisionist line and method of the central leadership of the U.S. now supported by the SWP majority? No serious political person can any longer consider this position.

The liquidationist views of Pablo and the LSSP majority cannot be viewed as something isolated and distant from the SWP. These are not "foreign" problems which we healthy Americans can turn our provincial backs upon and get on to our party building work. These very same views are today finding root right within our party. We are speaking not only of oppositional rightist tendencies, like Weiss and Swabeck, but of the majority itself. Unless the party as a whole faces up to this international challenge the very party we are seeking so hard to build will be placed in jeopardy.

Pablo, when he seeks to find an ally to support his complete capitulation to Krushchev's international line, looks to -- James P. Cannon. It is Cannon's letter on the Cuban missiles crisis which Pablo eagerly endorses. This is, of course, politically logical and proper. This letter of Cannon's, with its picture of the Kremlin acting in the interests of world peace and its solidarity with Bertrand Russell and Nehru, marks a complete capitulation to the Krushchevist line of peaceful coexistence and a total abandonment of revolutionary working class outlook during a period of great crisis.

One of the major political criticisms launched against Pablo by the U.S. majority in its statement "The Political Orientation of Comrade Pablo" is that Pablo has in reality abandoned the concept of Political revolution. Pablo, the U.S. majority states, identifies the "destalinization process" with political revolution--that is he sees the political revolution as a process of a number of reforms of the bureaucracy.

But this view is not held by Pablo alone. There is a strong tendency in this direction within the SWP majority itself -- and moreover this tendency has been evident for at least five years now. Joseph Hansen, the architect of the "reunification", is the main proponent within the party majority of Pablo's position. As early as 1958 he stated:

It is much closer to reality to view the program of political revolution as the total series of reforms, gained through militant struggle culminating in the transfer of power to the workers.

No revolution comes in a single oversized dose like a horse pill. (Joseph Hansen "Proposed Roads to Soviet Democracy" ISR Spring, 1958.)

This view is identical in all respects with that of Pablo--with one notable exception. Pablo at least sees a "violent, insurrectional phase" of the political revolution--if for only a brief moment.

This view has persisted in the leading circles of the majority up to this day. It is the reason for the absence of the concept of political revolution from the 1961 International Resolution of the party drafted primarily by Hansen. It is also the reason for the at best ambiguous treatment of the political revolution in the majority resolution on China passed at the 1963 convention. More recently Hansen has propounded the very same view in his review of Deutscher's latest book in the ISR. Political revolution to Hansen: "did not necessarily mean a 'violent explosion,' although it would certainly signify a . . . thoroughgoing shakeup undertaken at the initiative of the masses." We are happy to see George Breitman's polemic in the current ISR against Hansen's review as being "too soft, too conciliatory." But Breitman fails to point out that the root of this conciliation can be found in the fact that Hansen has almost wholly gone over to Deutscher's position on the political revolution and that this position of Hansen's has deeply permeated the political documents of the party as a whole and badly disoriented our cadre.

Pablo's man in Latin America, Frias, launched a big polemic against an article in the Pablote press in Europe which was critical of the FAUV in Venezuela because of its adventurist tactics and its separation from the proletariat in Venezuela. The main question here is not whether Frias's attack is aimed at the proper quarter but whether Frias is right or wrong. Can there be any question but that a large section of the party today would agree with Frias in his totally uncritical approach towards a struggle which was a complete fiasco precisely because it was not oriented towards the working class? Once again the revisionist sickness is not a distant, foreign problem but has deep roots right here in our own party.

The U.S. announces its complete solidarity with Pablo on the Algerian question. Not one criticism does it have of either Pablo's functioning in Algeria as a minor official in the bourgeois government or in his totally uncritical political approach to this bourgeois government. The SWP leadership through the Militant expresses the identical line. But can we really separate Pablo's pro-Krushchev line internationally from his line in Algeria of adaptation to the colonial bourgeoisie? Isn't it clear to all that Pablo's complete flip from a pro-Nazi position to a pro-Krushchev position in the past two years has its roots in the position of the Ben Bella Government on international matters? The colonial national bourgeoisie from Nasser and Nkrumah through to Ben Bella share Krushchev's whole outlook of peaceful collaboration with imperialism. Is there really any fundamental difference between Perera's entry into the bourgeois Bandaranaike Government and Pablo-Germain-Hansen's uncritical political support for the bourgeois Ben Bella government which openly collaborates with French imperialism and which jails Communists in the spirit of Nasser and "Arab socialism."

Even Perera's opportunism towards the bourgeois democratic establishment has its reflection inside the SWP and on a domestic level as well as on an international level as reflected through the party's position on Algeria. How else can we describe the party majority's panicky reaction to the Kennedy assassination -- its urging of "orderly processes", its appeal to the "voices of sanity" of a Warren, its call for an investigation by the bourgeois government into the affair, its sympathies for a Mrs. Kennedy rather than a Mrs. Oswald. How else describe its continual appeals to the Federal Government to use troops in the South? Can a revolutionist actually urge the Negro masses to depend on the troops of a bourgeois state to protect themselves? Does not such an approach completely undermine our traditional slogan of defense guards organized by the Negro masses themselves? The Negro masses need defense guards not simply because the Federal Government won't send troops. They need these guards because if the Government sent troops these troops would be used as much -- if not more -- against the Negro people as the racists in order to preserve "orderly processes" -- that is the white supremacist status quo.

We state clearly and unambiguously that the position of the majority at the time of the Kennedy Assassination and in relation to the Southern struggle is cut out of the same opportunist cloth as Perera's more open capitulation to his bourgeoisie.

During the whole period from 1961 to 1963 we reiterated time and time again, in political solidarity with the International Committee, that a reunification of the Fourth International without the fullest political discussion prior to the actual reunification could only lead to disaster and the further disintegration of the international movement and the party here. Our position has been fully vindicated. One year after reunification the Posados split is followed up by the expulsion of 15% of the US. under the leadership of the man who was international secretary for fifteen years. The majority of the LSSP, including the center section supported by the U.S., have openly entered a bourgeois government--an event unprecedented in our international movement.

Here inside the SWP we have seen a proliferation of rightist political tendencies with deeply liquidationist outlooks. The Weiss grouping has already partly left the party. The SWabeck grouping has evolved into a liquidationist formation having nothing in common with Trotskyism and enjoying the support of at least 15% of the party membership. Inside the majority tendency the disintegrative political process continues unchecked. Our most prominent leader, James P. Cannon, blocs with Krushchev over the missile crisis. The architect of reunification, Hansea goes over to Deutscher on the critical question of political revolution. Dobbs and the rest of the leadership proclaim their faith in "orderly processes" during a period of crisis and seek to impose the troops of the bourgeois state on the Negro masses of the South.

There can no longer be any further refusal to face up to the political, theoretical and methodological crisis tearing apart our party and the international formation to which it is presently in political solidarity. For the very survival of the party a thoroughgoing discussion of these questions must be organized immediately in all branches.

We are well aware that such a discussion in between preconvention periods is an extraordinary step. We are demanding such a discussion precisely because we face a crisis of the most extraordinary character. Leninists are never fetishistic over organizational matters. They willingly make adjustments in organizational forms to fit the political needs of the movement. To perpetuate a sterile discussion during a period when the party has important external work to do is a criminal act against the Bolshevik party. Not to organize a discussion when a deep political crisis tears apart the party and the international movement is at least as criminal an action. Those who counterpose pressing and necessary party building work to a process essential to the very survival of the party itself are in no sense of the term Leninists.

Because of the extreme importance of this question, and because we have been barred from our rightful representation on leading committees of the party, we are informing our fellow rank and file party members of this appeal.

Comradely,

Jack Arnold
 Danny F.
 Neil M.
 Fred M.
 Sylvia M.
 Earl Owens
 Dave Van Ronk
 Martha Wells
 Tim W.