

April 11, 1966

MEMO TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE MAJORITY

Dear Comrade,

The current issue of the International Socialist Review carries the documents of the world congress of the Fourth International held last December. As you will be able to judge for yourself, it makes a very substantial issue of the magazine and one that should prove very useful in presenting the positions of the world Trotskyist movement on the most crucial current international issues. Members of the National Committee should take an active part in the branch meetings which discuss the various resolutions.

Your special attention is called to a paragraph in the resolution on the Sino-Soviet conflict with which we are in disagreement. The draft submitted to the congress carried a paragraph (on page 8 of the mimeographed bulletin issued during the discussion period before the congress) that read:

"The Mao leadership bears many stigmata of its Stalinist training and background; but it was not shaped just by Stalinism pure and simple. It was also shaped by long years of difficult struggles and underwent the impact of the great popular revolution that brought it to power. These experiences not only combined with the Stalinism of the leading group in contradictory ways, it also considerably modified this Stalinism, giving it unique forms and making it quite one-sided to call it merely Stalinism without noting the differences."

In the final version approved by the congress, this paragraph was changed to read as follows (see page 80 of the Spring ISR):

"The Chinese Communist party cannot be considered to have been a Stalinist party in the strict sense of the term; that is, subordinated since the twenties to the bureaucratic leadership of the Kremlin. The Mao leadership had its own personality; and its policies, although often marked in practice by compromises with the Moscow leadership which led to the gravest deviations, had a generally centrist character leaning toward the left. The Mao leadership was also shaped by long years of difficult struggles and it underwent the impact of the great popular revolution that brought it to power."

As is evident, what has been introduced is the concept of the Mao leadership being "left centrist" rather than Stalinist.

In our opinion this goes counter to the position taken on this question long ago by the Trotskyist movement and which appears to us to still remain valid.

So far as we can learn, the request for the modification originated from the delegation of a section of the Fourth International that is extremely critical of the Mao leadership. We do not know what kind of discussion occurred around this point inasmuch as the minutes of the congress do not indicate the stands taken by the participants. In any case, the point did not come up at all during the discussion before the congress; and so there was no opportunity for the movement to consider the question beforehand.

Since the comrades of the United Secretariat accepted the proposed modification, it is evident that we have a difference with them on this point. We are now seeking to learn the extent of the difference and are consulting with them about ways and means of resolving it.

We should like to emphasize that the difference involves the characterization of the Mao leadership and not current political issues in any field, including those involving Peking. On these it is clear from the documents themselves that the general line does not differ from the general line we have been following in accordance with the decisions of SWP conventions. In the absence of political differences over such questions as the need to support Peking as against Moscow in the Sino-Soviet dispute, the role of the Mao leadership in hampering the defense of Vietnam and in helping to pave the way to the debacle in Indonesia, it should be possible to find means of resolving this difference in a perfectly normal way and without any heat.

This should be stressed to comrades in mentioning the difference. It takes place within the framework of a solid political agreement on the key issues of the day throughout the world. Special attention should also be called to the big achievements of the congress in consolidating the reunification and in elaborating documents of such high revolutionary Marxist caliber.

Comradely yours,

J. Hansen
Joseph Hansen