

STATEMENT ADOPTED BY THE SWP NATIONAL COMMITTEE  
ON THE SALLUSTRO KIDNAPPING AND STAND TAKEN  
BY THE UNITED SECRETARIAT

The National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party, having considered the motion passed by a majority of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International at its April 15-16 meeting disapproving the publication in The Militant and Labor Challenge of statements adopted by the political committees of the Socialist Workers Party and the League for Socialist Action/Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière concerning the kidnapping of Sallustro, takes the following position:

1) The motion passed by the majority of the United Secretariat is factually in error in ascribing to these statements a failure to express solidarity with members of the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP) and the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT-Combatiente) in face of the repressive campaign opened against them by the Lanusse regime. The statements of both the SWP and the ISA/LSO clearly outlined the background to the kidnapping, pinned responsibility for the violence on the Argentinian ruling class and the dictatorial Lanusse regime, and expressed full solidarity with the worldwide campaign for the release of all political prisoners in Argentina and an end to the repression.

The record shows that the Canadian and American Trotskyists have been in the forefront in organizing material help for the political prisoners in Argentina and Latin America as a whole. To suggest otherwise, as the motion of the majority does, can only serve to prejudice the minds of uninformed members of the Fourth International against the SWP and the ISA/LSO.

2) Likewise in error factually is the assertion of the motion passed by the majority of the United Secretariat that publication of the statements made by the SWP and the ISA/LSO constituted a public "attack" against a section of the Fourth International. In actuality both statements did no more than to differentiate politically from a very bad error committed by the ERP-PRT, an error that was damaging on a world scale to the Fourth International and to all sectors of the world Trotskyist movement. This error consisted of substituting the action of a small, isolated group for action by the masses.

3) The statements of both the SWP and the ISA/LSO were in consonance with the principled position of Trotskyism in explaining how the error committed by the ERP-PRT could be avoided.

The statement made by the Political Committee of the SWP said the following on this: "In place of powerful actions by the masses themselves, the ERP is attempting to substitute small actions by a tiny group. Their hopes are placed on these actions serving as examples to the people living in the slums. They hope that the dramatic nature of the 'exemplary actions' will inspire the masses to begin moving toward toppling the old regime and establishing a government of their own.

"In reality, the work of bringing the masses into the political arena in all their invincible power differs qualitatively from such notions. It requires deep involvement in the daily life of the masses.

It requires patient struggling, under the guidance of a revolutionary-socialist party, to project demands directly linked to the economic, social, and political needs of the masses, and to organize support for these demands in such a way as to raise the self-confidence of the masses and take them through transitional steps onto the road of a socialist revolution."

4) The United Secretariat did not issue a statement at the time of the Sallustro kidnapping specifying its stand. In face of the worldwide repercussions to the kidnapping, the various sectors of the world Trotskyist movement had little choice but to issue statements of their own. Besides The Militant and Labor Challenge such publications as La Gauche, Rouge, and The Red Mole also felt compelled to indicate their stands, although the latter were completely uncritical of the ERP-PRT.

5) The Political Committee of the SWP made its statement on April 3 in full expectation that the United Secretariat would, when it met, issue a statement of similar nature, expressing moral solidarity with the guerrilla fighters who had conducted the kidnapping while indicating that it differed with them as to the correctness of the action politically. Such a statement by the United Secretariat was all the more called for in view of the fact that none of the resolutions passed by the last world congress of the Fourth International sanctioned substituting the actions of a small, isolated group for actions by the masses.

6) It is true that the minority at the last world congress held that the positions taken by the majority in favor of rural guerrilla warfare for a prolonged period on a continental scale in Latin America, if taken to their logical conclusions would end up in diverting the Trotskyist cadres from accomplishing the necessary party-building tasks and in sanctioning the substitution of actions by small, isolated groups for actions by the masses. But the majority denied that this was the logic of their position. Thus it remained to be seen how they would react when an action occurred of the kind initiated by the ERP-PRT. It could be hoped that they would back away from the logic of the position they took at the last world congress and would reaffirm the principled position of Trotskyism against adventurism.

7) Instead of doing this the majority of the United Secretariat equivocated at the April 15-16 meeting. They neither approved nor disapproved the kidnapping and execution of Sallustro. They abstained from taking either a public or internal stand, rejecting a proposal by a minority of the United Secretariat to issue a public statement similar to those issued by the SWP and the ISA/ISO.

8) In all consistency this meant that the majority of the United Secretariat left it open to the various sectors of the world Trotskyist movement to take whatever positions seemed correct to them. Nevertheless the majority of the United Secretariat passed a motion disapproving the publication of the statements already made by the SWP and the ISA/ISO. These two acts together amounted to shame-faced condemnation of any political differentiation from the ERP-PRT error, such as that expressed by the SWP and the ISA/ISO. It amounted to just as shame-faced approval of an "all hail" attitude toward the kidnapping and execution of Sallustro, such as that voiced by Rouge, La Gauche, and The Red Mole.

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9) The National Committee of the SWP notes with special concern the specific instructions "not to publish" the two resolutions of the SWP and the LSA/LSO "in the International's organs, or in organs expressing its positions." This is the first time since the Reunification Congress of 1963 that such instructions have been issued. The effect of these instructions is to gag those who are critical of the error committed by the ERP-PRT and to encourage those who approve the error, since no instructions were issued not to publish expressions of political solidarity with the ERP-PRT error.

More ominously, the clear implication is that the ERP-PRT, in kidnapping and executing Sallustro was acting in accordance with the line of the majority of the United Secretariat, that this line holds on an international scale, that it should be promulgated by all the sections and organs of the Fourth International, and that the majority of the United Secretariat will brook no public criticism, however mild, of applying it. In this way a line is being foisted onto the Fourth International that was not explicitly formulated or adopted at the last world congress and that constitutes a departure from the traditions and program of Trotskyism.

10) In view of these considerations, the National Committee of the SWP approves the action of the Political Committee in publishing the April 3 statement which expressed moral solidarity with the guerrilla fighters of the ERP-PRT while criticizing the kidnapping of Sallustro as a political error. In addition, the National Committee of the SWP condemns the procedure followed by a majority of the United Secretariat and rejects its disapproval of the publication of the statements of the political committees of the SWP and the LSA/LSO.

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