

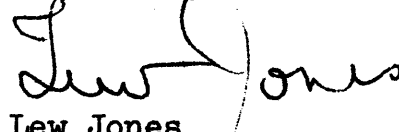
14 Charles Lane
New York, New York 10014
September 6, 1974

TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed for your information is an exchange of correspondence between Bob Langston and Barbara Matson and Jack Barnes, and a letter pertaining to this exchange from Gus H rowitz to Barry Sheppard.

Comradely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lew Jones". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Lew Jones
National Office

New York, New York
September 5, 1974

Barry Sheppard

Los Angeles

Dear Barry,

Enclosed for your information is a copy of a letter we received in the national office from Bob Langston, along with an accompanying statement by him and the other supporters of the IMT who resigned from the IT party prior to its split convention at the end of May. This material is being sent out to the National Committee for its information.

Here are a few thoughts on this statement that I wanted to share with you (page numbers will refer to the mimeographed copy of the statement sent out to the NC).

The first three pages or so merely comprise the to-be-expected case for the defense in the matter of the IT party. There is nothing really serious in these arguments; in fact, the Control Commission report already answers all of their main points, so there is no need to dwell on them. Comrade Langston and his associates -- despite all their current protests that the IT was a legitimate group in the party -- really registered their definitive opinion back in May, when they voted with their feet and quit the IT party prior to the IT's split convention. By this action, they recognized that the IT had taken a course that was incompatible with party membership.

There is one point in their brief that should be noted, however; that is, one of their challenges to the procedure followed by the party leadership. They say on page 2 that "this expulsion procedure strictly implies that the expulsions were programmatic in character."

Adherence to the IMT program was not the issue, of course. But the procedure by which the IT party members were placed outside the SWP was not, strictly speaking, a disciplinary procedure. They were not charged with an instance, or instances of infractions of SWP discipline (although many did occur). If that had been the charge, then a trial to establish the facts might have been in order (although, here too, a Control Commission investigation supersedes any local trial).

In this case, what was involved was a matter of political evaluation of the secret IT documents. The documents spoke for themselves. It required no trial to evaluate them. As you pointed out in your talk at the national educational conference, the only question of fact that could conceivably have been involved was whether or not these documents were actually IT documents. Once the documents were acknowledged as genuine (and no one has challenged this), then the question of a trial becomes moot. There only remained the matter of evaluating the meaning of the documents.

The Control Commission established, and the PC concurred in this, that these documents proved that the IT had constituted itself as a separate, rival party to the SWP; and the PC then made a political decision that affiliation to that IT party was incompatible with membership in the SWP. In that sense, the PC action of July 4 was not disciplinary; it constituted recognition of a political reality.

The remaining portion of the Langston, et al statement is fantastic. They argue that at the August, 1973, SWP convention the party leadership began to break down the distinction between party and faction "by solemnly affirming that it would turn the Party organization as such into an instrument of factional struggle." They base this charge on their own twisted interpretation of the convention decision to instruct the NC "to use all the forces and resources at its command to struggle for a democratic world congress and a Trotskyist Fourth International."

As you know, that motion meant exactly what it said. It did not mean converting the SWP into a faction. Among the "factional abuses" resulting from the application of this motion were the translation and publication of internal discussion material in Spanish, and the sending of a large delegation of SWP observers to the world congress (including supporters of the IMT, paid for out of SWP funds). I believe that the pressure of our convention decisions was also one of the factors that finally shamed the IMT leaders into translating a lot of the backlog of internal discussion material into French. They did it at the last minute, and they didn't translate all that they were obligated to do, but at least they made an improvement.

Much worse than the fantastic interpretation made by Comrades Langston et al is the conclusion they draw from the August, 1973, convention motion and the July 4, 1974, PC decision on the IT party. Despite the fine legal distinctions they try to draw to take the edge off their argument, they indicate that their first loyalty is not to the SWP but to their faction, the IMT.

Thus, they assert that the adoption of the August, 1973 convention motion "inserted an element of corruption, in the most literal sense, into the Party" (page 6). They speak of a "blow at the integrity of the Party," and of the "badly mutilated integrity of the Party" (page 11).

Furthermore, they assert that ever since the August 1973 convention, the units of the party "have been functioning without any authority at all" (page 7); and they speak later of "the self-induced collapse of the authority of the SWP leadership as a party leadership" (page 10).

And finally, they state that there has been an "overthrow of that objective standard of political conduct that constitutes party loyalty" (page 6). The reason they offer is that

as a result of the August 1973 convention decision, "it has been impossible, logically impossible, for any comrade to answer the question, If I carry out this assignment, given in the name of the Party, am I in reality carrying out a Party assignment or am I carrying out an ITF assignment masquerading as a Party assignment?" (page 6). And they go on to say that there is no basis "for confidence that any action decided to be carried out in the name of the Party is aimed directly at building the Party" -- and they specify that this vote of no confidence applies to financial contributions to the party and to the sale of party publications.

Finally, they insist on a series of steps that must be taken by the party leadership to bring about the "reestablishment of that standard of political conduct which is Party loyalty" (page 11). This can only mean that unless these steps are taken, they will no longer feel bound to observe party loyalty (despite the formal pledge to the contrary in the concluding paragraph of their statement).

It is this shift -- from loyalty to the party to loyalty to a faction -- that explains why Comrades Langston et al never informed the party leadership of the IT splitting operation that was going on. They admit this: "We did not go to the Party leadership with any of our apprehensions about the possible implications of the IT's development" (page 9). They advance as their justification that they had no confidence in the party leadership, which they maintain placed factional interests above party interests. In other words, they accuse the party leadership of doing what they are doing.

Furthermore, these comrades use the same arguments to defend the IMT's complicity in the IT split. They assert that "the IMT Bureau intervened in the only way open to it to reverse any drift towards a split" (page 10) -- that is, through discussion with the IT leaders in the secret IMT bodies, but not through the elected leadership of the SWP. It was not only unnecessary, but would have been an actual mistake, according to Comrades Langston et al, to operate through the elected leadership bodies of the SWP. Even this argument raises another question. Why didn't they go to the elected leadership bodies of the Fourth International? Why was the United Secretariat bypassed?

The question naturally arises: does the Langston et al statement represent the views of the IMT leadership as a whole? If so, their argumentation represents an advance sample of a line that will be pushed in a possible way by the IMT in the coming period.

One final point. The IMT's complicity in the IT split was just one of a number of actions taken by the IMT that ran counter to the unity agreements reached at the world congress. Among the other major steps they took -- prior to our PC decision on July 4, by the way -- was:

1. The decision by Alain Krivine and the FCR leadership to conduct a public speaking tour in Canada in the most vulgar factional manner.

2. The decision by the United Secretariat majority to publish a fallacious and malicious public attack on the PST.

3. The decision by the Spanish-language Cuarta Internacional to make public portions of the IMT's resolution on Argentina attacking the PST that the IMT had agreed to keep internal.

The ITF Steering Committee has met and will soon release a statement assessing the meaning of developments since the world congress.

Comradely,
s/Gus Horowitz

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14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
September 6, 1974

Bob Langston

Catskill, New York

Dear Bob,

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter to the Control Commission dated August 23, 1974.

Comradely,
s/Barbara Matson

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14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
September 6, 1974

Bob Langston

Catskill, New York

Dear Bob,

This is to acknowledge your letter of August 15 to the National Committee and cover letter of August 16 addressed to me.

We have made your letter of August 15 available to the members of the National Committee.

We also received the copy of your letter of August 23 to the Control Commission. When the discussion bulletin is opened any party member may submit an article indicating their opinion of the Control Commission report, the recommendations of which were adopted by the Political Committee on July 4, 1974.

Comradely,
s/Jack Barnes
National Secretary
Socialist Workers Party

Catskill, N.Y.
August 23, 1974

To: Gus Horowitz

Dear Gus:

There are three passages in the CC's report on the IT that distort somewhat the views Berta and I expressed in our letter of resignation from the tendency.

On page 6, you and the other CC comrades write: "They /the Langstons/ also recognized that it is not possible to hold membership in the IT and abide by the SWP constitution." Nowhere in the document do we indicate that we recognized any such thing, and in fact we don't think it true. Our point was rather that if the Williams document were adopted and acted on consistently, the IT would very likely become a formation it would be impossible to belong to and "abide by the SWP constitution."

Further, on page 11, the CC report states: "The article by Berta Langston and Bob Langston quotes from the Hank Williams (Bill Massey) document to prove that the policy of the IT is to put itself forward in public as an independent entity." And likewise, you and the other CC comrades write on page 13: "As Berta Langston and Bob Langston explained, the IT sees itself as 'an organized grouping essentially independent of the SWP and linked to the FI as the nucleus of its "future" and "true" section in the United States.'" Again, what we in fact tried to explain and prove was something rather different: that if the Williams document were adopted and acted on consistently, the IT would begin to elaborate a policy of putting itself forward in public as an independent entity and would begin to see itself as a grouping independent of the SWP.

Could you arrange for some kind of notice along these lines to appear in a future Bulletin?

In the present unfortunate situation, it is probably necessary to add that we don't at all regard these distortions of our views as malicious, factionally motivated, or anything of the kind. The scrupulous care you and the other CC comrades exercised elsewhere in distinguishing between our meaning and your conclusions -- usually by quoting sufficient context -- offers conclusive evidence to the contrary.

I am enclosing a copy of this letter for the PC.

Comradely,
s/ Bob Langston

copy: PC

Catskill, N.Y.
August 16, 1974

Jack Barnes
National Office, SWP

Dear Jack:

1. Enclosed is a letter to the Party's National Committee from eight supporters of the International Majority's political positions who had notified the Party leadership of their resignation from the IMT. Could you please bring it to the attention of the NC comrades?

2. The signers of this letter have consulted and decided:

a) We will continue to collaborate on the preparation of any documents we think necessary to defend the political positions of the International Majority and the integrity of the Socialist Workers Party, and we will establish whatever temporary and informal structures are necessary to effect this collaboration. These documents will be presented to the Party's leading committees or, at the time deemed appropriate by those leading committees, to the Party as a whole;

b) We will consult to the extent we deem necessary with our tendency cothinkers abroad. Our relation to the IMT is at present purely ideological: We are not at present requesting representation on any IMT body, and we neither regard ourselves as bound by the discipline of any IMT body nor has any IMT body attempted to impose any discipline on us.

Unless we are informed otherwise, we will assume that these decisions are permissible under the PC's interpretation of the SWP's constitution and organizational principles and of the democratic-centralist norms of the world Trotskyist movement.

Comradely,
s/Bob Langston

Copy: United Secretariat

August 15, 1974

To: National Committee, Socialist Workers Party

Dear Comrades:

On July 4, the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party expelled by decree 69 members of the SWP on the grounds that they had constituted a rival party, the so-called Internationalist Tendency Party.

Essentially, the PC's action consisted of three parts. First, acting on a recommendation of the Control Commission, it decreed the existence of a certain rival party. The PC proclaimed the existence of a formation to be characterized not as a tendency, not as a faction -- secret, disloyal or otherwise -- and not simply as a rival political grouping, but as a rival party.

Much of the CC report is concerned with alleged indisciplined actions and expressions of a disloyal attitude on the part of some declared adherents of the Internationalist Tendency and with an allegedly high degree of internal organization attained by the IT. The comrades of the CC did not, however, claim to be in possession of any evidence indicating any preparations to undertake any public activities in the name of any group distinct from the SWP and YSA.

Secondly, the PC decreed that 69 members of the SWP belong to this so-called Internationalist Tendency Party. It did not state how it arrived at precisely the figure 69, nor did it describe the method employed to determine which individual comrades were to be selected to be among the 69. Evidently, though, the method of selection was this: All those comrades who had declared their support to the documents that constituted the platform of the Internationalist Tendency before either of the last two SWP conventions were to be regarded as members of the so-called IT Party, except for eight comrades who had taken the step of notifying some Party leader that they had withdrawn from the IT Caucus. That this was indeed the method of selection is supported by the fact that several of the expelled comrades didn't consider themselves members of the IT although they had voted for the platform of the IT. At least one of the expelled comrades had formally resigned from the IT but had neglected to notify the National Office. Neither the CC nor the PC, it should be noted, claimed that any of the 69 comrades expelled thought they belonged to any party but the SWP.

Finally, the PC proclaimed that by constituting this "IT Party" these 69 comrades had placed themselves "outside the constitutional provisions of membership in the Socialist Workers Party." Not one of the comrades was informed in advance that he or she was charged with belonging to a rival party. Not one was given a trial or hearing of any sort at which he or she might have challenged the claim of the PC. Not one of them was offered any opportunity to repudiate any actions or views -- possibly taken or expressed by other

individuals -- for which the PC declared him or her coresponsible, solely on the grounds that he or she had at one time or another indicated support to the declared political positions of the IT.

This expulsion procedure strictly implies that the expulsions were programmatic in character. For unless this is the case, it is impossible that a comrade's declared agreement with certain documented political ideas could classify that comrade as belonging to a group, membership in which places the comrade outside the constitutional provisions of membership in the SWP.

Moreover, the expulsion procedure implies that it is the IMT positions which conflict with the programmatic basis of the SWP. For some of the expelled comrades had not supported the IT's counter political resolution before the August Convention but only, before the December Convention, the documents which the IT shares with the IMT as a whole. In this connection it should be noted that no leading comrades of the SWP have ever asserted -- at least not in any document -- that the IT's positions on U.S. questions are in their eyes incompatible with the programmatic basis of the Party, however wrong-headed they might think them. But certain cautious moves towards characterizing the IMT positions in general as programmatically non-Trotskyist have been taken by LTF leaders. (We refer particularly to Comrade Joe Hansen's opinion, expressed in his report to the New York LTF caucus, that there is nearly sufficient evidence to support an analysis which would demonstrate that the IMT line is petty-bourgeois in nature.)

To date, political positions within the International have progressively polarized around the platforms of the two big tendencies. "Third" currents have lost ground. This is inherent in the process of a tendency struggle in which each side step by step brings forth ever more fundamental issues and thus ever more explicitly defines its line in opposition to the other. Under these circumstances, any leadership action -- like the July 4 expulsions as they were carried out -- which implies that support to the IMT positions is contradictory to adherence to the programmatic foundation of the SWP means in practice to impose the faction platform of the LTF as the programmatic basis of the SWP.

The PC, in short, expelled supporters of the IMT under a procedure that strictly implies the expulsions to be programmatic and it used language insinuating this to be the case. It thereby, in reality, imposed the platform of the LTF as the programmatic foundation of the SWP.

These expulsions raise a number of important questions. Before dealing with the central one, we want to mention a couple of secondary ones.

First, the PC's action is of dubious statutory legitimacy. What is involved here is not whether Article VI or Article VIII

of the SWP Constitution governs disciplinary proceedings other than those instituted at the branch level. Nor is any question of the constitutional rights of individual comrades or of organized minorities as against the constitutional powers of leading committees directly raised.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the comrades of the CC express an opinion in their report which, if it should be adopted by the Party, would render any statute on the rights of organized minorities incoherent. For they write: "But an organized faction can circulate its own internal discussion bulletin only on the condition that it receive the prior approval of the party and that its bulletin be made available to the party." (It should be stressed that this is only an opinion, for although the comrades of the CC present it as a gloss on the 1965 resolution, The Organizational Character of the SWP, and although they claim for it the dignity of a "principle of Leninist organization," it is not at all implied by anything in that resolution nor has it, as far as we know, ever been incorporated into the statutes of any democratic centralist organization.) But what conceivable sense could be made of a statute that would, on the one hand, grant factions the right in general -- without anybody's prior permission -- in the words of the CC "to meet privately" and "to circulate drafts of proposed documents among faction members for the purpose of preparing material for presentation to the party as a whole," and yet would, on the other hand, deny this right to privacy when faction discussion was transferred from meetings to paper and would permit comments on the proposed drafts to be circulated among faction members only with the prior approval of the leadership?

However, the PC's action does raise a statutory question because the Statutes of the Fourth International impose certain constraints on the disciplinary powers even of leading committees. For Section VII, Subsection 29, Paragraph 8, provides, without qualification, that "members facing disciplinary action are entitled to know in advance the accusations brought against them, to present their defense and, except where it is geographically impossible, to confront their accusers." None of these conditions was satisfied in the case of the expulsion of the IT comrades. (We trust that no comrade would be tempted to deny that expulsion is a disciplinary action, even if that term is never used, even if it is carried out on programmatic grounds, and even if it is decreed by the formula that the comrades in question belong to a rival party and that "this status places them outside the constitutional provisions of membership in the Socialist Workers Party.")

Moreover, it is at least questionable that national sections or sympathizing groups have the statutory authority to expel members of the International Executive Committee. For Section 3, Subsection 9, provides that the IEC "exercises disciplinary powers over its own members." But two of the 69 comrades expelled on July 4 were granted permission by the 10th World Congress to attend meetings of the IEC as fraternal

observers, one with the rank of full member, the other with the rank of alternate member, of the IEC.

Likewise important, but not central to this case, is whether it is wise for a leadership to carry out expulsions-- even if it had unchallengeable statutory authority to do so -- through a procedure that strictly implies, and with language that insinuates, a programmatic basis for the expulsions, without explicitly stating that this is in fact the case. And it is not a great deal to expect of a leadership that before carrying out programmatic expulsions, it will initiate, except in the most extreme circumstances, a discussion in the whole organization to explain and defend its view that the conceptions in question are incompatible with Trotskyism or, short of that, with maintaining the necessary minimum of political homogeneity.

Important as these questions are, they are not fundamental.

What is fundamental is that this action by the LTF leadership of the SWP is a second -- and very nearly decisive -- assault on the integrity of the Socialist Workers Party.

The political foundation of the SWP as an organization is its relationship to the Fourth International; politically it is the unit of the Fourth International in the United States, even though it is prevented by reactionary legislation from affiliating to the FI. Its integrity depends on the practical recognition of the principle that as a party, as the organized expression of the FI in the United States, it is distinct from any tendencies or factions that may exist within the FI, regardless of what tendency or faction its leadership and membership, in their majority, may at any given moment support.

This principle of the distinction between party and faction in no way, of course, contradicts the norm that the party majority has the unconditional right to decide line -- within the framework of the authoritative declarations of the International -- and that every comrade must abide by these majority decisions. Rather, these two principles complement and in practice imply one another. For without practical acceptance of "majority decision -- minority submission," any tendency conflict within the International would immediately tend to disintegrate national units of the FI into distinct, public factional groupings, each raising the claim to be the section, the party. But without strict practical acceptance of the principle of the distinction between party and faction, the authority necessary to lead the party and not merely a faction -- the capacity to assure in practice the submission of the minority to the majority -- is undermined.

On August 9, 1973, the SWP leadership took a step that violated this principle of the distinction between party and faction by solemnly affirming that it would turn the Party organization as such into an instrument of factional struggle. Since that date, it has made no effort to correct that error.

On July 4, the SWP leadership again violated that principle by taking an action that in fact imposes a factional platform as the programmatic basis of the Party. The PC fancifully charges that the IT transformed itself from a faction into a party. If these two steps taken by the SWP leadership remain uncorrected, it will really very nearly have transformed a party into a faction.

Last August 9, the 25th National Convention adopted, at the behest of the Party leadership, a motion approving the general line of the PC's World Movement Report. The heart of that report was a declaration of factional war on the majority of the leadership of the Fourth International. Of five points singled out by the motion for special emphasis, the last was:

"5. The convention instructs and empowers the incoming National Committee to use all the forces and resources at its command to struggle for a democratic world congress and a Trotskyist Fourth International."

Not merely the literal content of the report, but the war ritual enacted in that convention session, made unmistakably clear the meaning of the words "to struggle for. . . a Trotskyist Fourth International." With no change in meaning at all, point five of that motion could have been phrased: "The convention instructs and empowers the incoming National Committee to place all the forces and resources at its command at the disposal of the soon-to-be-declared Leninist-Trotskyist Faction for use in its factional war on the majority of the leadership of the Fourth International."

At its request, the Party leadership received an instruction to turn the Party organization as such -- the greatest "force and resource" at its command and the sum of all the rest -- into a weapon for factional warfare.

The PC, moreover, never issued any simple, clear statement reaffirming the principle of the integrity of the Party, of the distinction between faction and party. In convention reports to the branches and in private discussion some of us had with PC members, the issue was, at best, simply evaded. Nor did the Party leadership ever undertake any actions -- at least prior to the time IMT adherents were placed by young Party supporters of the LTF on the YSA National Committee -- which would even have hinted that that motion would not be implemented with unrestricted scope. On the contrary, what had already before the August convention become a pattern of leadership actions, the factional nature of which has been documented as well as it possibly could be short of a genuine investigation by an international parity body, became even more sharply defined. At the convention itself, this pattern was thrown into sharp relief both by the charges of "disloyalty" and "adhering to a secret faction" raised against supporters of the IMT in the SWP and by the outrageous denial of National Committee representation to the IMT's point of view.

But the comrades of the CC are right when they insist that it is "not necessary to spend a great deal of time to examine many of the specific incidents, allegations and counter-allegations." The simple fact that the leadership requested and got passage of that motion and refrained from any subsequent actions that would suggest any limitation or modification of it in its application, is fully sufficient to explain certain developments.

Adoption of that motion inserted an element of corruption, in the most literal sense, into the Party. Although the 1965 resolution on organization correctly insists that party loyalty is not merely an abstract idea but a standard of political conduct, adoption of that motion overthrew that objective standard. For thenceforth it has been impossible, logically impossible, for any comrade to answer for himself or herself the question, If I act in this particular way, am I being loyal or disloyal to the Party? And this is so, simply because ever since the Party leadership requested and got an instruction to make the Party organization into a factional weapon, it has been impossible, logically impossible, for any comrade to answer the question, If I carry out this assignment, given in the name of the Party, am I in reality carrying out a Party assignment or am I carrying out an IFF assignment masquerading as a Party assignment?

And with the overthrow of that objective standard of political conduct that constitutes party loyalty, there occurred, in certain essential respects, a collapse of leadership authority.

The formal aspect of this collapse of authority is obvious. For from the moment that the Party leadership solemnly declared to every comrade in the world movement that thenceforth every action taken in the name of the SWP would have to be regarded as a weapon of factional warfare, any disciplinary action taken by any Party body that touched on the tendency conflict in the International has necessarily been under a cloud. Under these circumstances, only an international parity body could possess the authority necessary to investigate incidents like those that occurred on May 11 or to take disciplinary action in connection with such incidents.

Furthermore, neither formal nor substantive authority can remain intact for an instant in a party with tendency differences in the absence of rational grounds for confidence that a leadership decision taken in the name of the Party, whether correct or incorrect, is immediately motivated by the shared goal of taking a step towards implementing the program of socialist revolution and not by the precisely not shared goal of gaining some factional advantage for the leadership's faction. Put crudely: Within very broad limits, you can very well expect people to do what you tell them to do, even if they think you are wrong, as long as they have reason to suppose that what you are telling them to do is aimed at achieving what they agree with you ought to be achieved. But it is very hard to expect people to do what you tell them to do if you give them every reason to suppose that what you tell them

to do is aimed at achieving what you think ought to be achieved but they think ought not to be achieved, and not at what both you and they think ought to be achieved.

But since August 9, 1973, when the Party leadership requested and got an instruction to turn the Party organization into a factional weapon, no comrade -- at least no comrade who does not participate in LTF caucus meetings -- has had any rational ground whatever for confidence that any action decided to be carried out in the name of the Party is aimed directly at building the party of socialist revolution and not at strengthening the tactical position of the LTF in its war on the majority of the International's leadership.

Since that day, every dime paid in Party dues or sustainer has inescapably raised the question: Is this dime going to be used to build the Party or is this dime going to be used to build the LTF? Every assignment to sell the publications of the Party has posed the question: Are the contents of these publications really intended to agitate, educate and organize for the socialist revolution or are they intended to win some purely factional gain for the LTF?

Thus, the comrades of the CC completely misunderstand the situation when they write: "If permitted to continue, the actions of the IT would result in the total breakdown of the authority of units of the SWP." Since last August 9, little that the IT comrades did or could do could lead to a breakdown of the authority of the units of the Party. That breakdown occurred at the 25th National Convention when the Party leadership took a step that immediately caused the collapse of its authority into a merely factional authority. From that moment on, the units of the Party -- as distinct from the units of the LTF -- have been functioning without any authority at all. From that moment on, the only objective source of Party, as distinct from LTF, units' ability to command discipline has been the power -- uncontested by anyone -- to lock comrades out of the hall. The leadership has been attempting to lead the Party armed only with factional authority.

It is, of course, possible that some actions undertaken by some ITers were beginning to undermine that factional authority of the Party leadership. This could, certainly, over an extended period of time lead to some impairment in the ability of the SWP to carry out its functions as an organization. If this is so -- and we have no way of knowing -- it simply means that the Party leadership stood before a basic choice: either to make an effort to recover its lost Party authority or, by a purge, to make it easier to lead its faction in the name of the Party. If this problem entered into the decision to expel the IT comrades at all, it is evident which course the leadership chose.

It is easy to understand that the objective meaning of that August 9 motion would escape the notice of some comrades who agree politically with the LTF. It is also easy to understand that many of these comrades -- rank-and-filers and leaders alike -- would begin to identify the Party with their faction.

Indeed, it is hard to explain the CC comrades' erroneous idea that any IT actions could, after August 9, 1973, undermine Party authority, except on the assumption that they too have fallen victim to that confusion.

Whatever the effects of the 25th Convention on the comrades of the ITF, its impact on the IT was little short of catastrophic.

Of course, any hard-fought tendency struggle in the International stimulates centrifugal forces within the sections and sympathizing groups. Of course, these forces are intensified once a number of splits have actually been consummated. Possibly half-formed fantasies of "greener pastures," fueled by powerful feelings of hope, bitterness and anxiety, were floating around in some IT heads. Possibly a few comrades had even begun to formulate a perspective based on the assumption of the "inevitability" of a split in the International and thus on the "necessity" to prepare for any eventuality.

But the overthrow, in August 1973, of that objective standard of Party loyalty -- followed two days later by the exclusion of the IMT current from the National Committee on the grounds of disloyalty -- and the corrosion of leadership authority by the August convention, necessarily contributed to a qualitative change in the development of the IT.

A conglomeration of false conceptions pertaining to the character of the Party, the functions of the tendency, and the unity of the International -- conceptions which if consistently pursued might well have propelled the IT towards an independent political existence -- began to take shape and gradually to dominate part of the tendency. Given what happened in the convention and the intensely factional atmosphere generally maintained in the Party, this process -- which reached its highest development in the weeks preceding the IT conference in Chicago -- was completely predictable. What is astonishing is not that it occurred but that it did not go much deeper much faster.

Here, we must write something about our role in the IT, because on the floor of two branches ITF comrades -- and not the newest rank-and-filers, either -- have accused some of us of disloyalty because we did not go the Party leadership with information about the tendency.

While we participated in the IT caucus, we were guided by the following general conceptions, which we still regard as sound:

- 1) Given the stage of development of political differences reached thus far, a split in the International would be unprincipled and would seriously undermine the gains achieved in recent years by a number of sections and sympathizing groups;

- 2) Whatever political and organizational mistakes it has made, the SWP leadership has not failed any decisive test of its capabilities; nor has anything happened that could justify the conclusion that the Party itself has become something other

than a revolutionary Marxist organization;

3) Thus, it is today impossible to make any organizational contribution to building the mass revolutionary party of the future that will overthrow the American bourgeoisie except in, with and through the SWP;

4) The function of any body of IMT supporters is to help the Party overcome its deviations by convincing comrades of correct political positions;

5) Any actions that could impair the ability of the SWP to carry out the functions of a revolutionary party or that, by their provocative character, could conceivably intensify the danger of a split -- even if they did not involve breaches of discipline -- had to be avoided.

We thus regarded and regard as thoroughly false and pernicious some of the ideas concerning the character of the Party, the unity of the International and the functions of the tendency that prior to the May conference were apparently coming to be rather widely held in the IT. Likewise we regarded and regard some actions taken by some ITers as utterly unjustifiable. Before we resigned from the IT, we argued as vigorously as we could against all incipient expressions of those ideas. We sought in every possible way to dissuade IT comrades from undertaking any kind of actions that, whether they involved actual infractions of discipline or not, could have even the appearance of involving such breaches or be otherwise provocative.

In doing these things, each of us made mistakes. One mistake, though, we did not make. We did not go to the Party leadership with any of our apprehensions about the possible implications of the IT's development. The reason is simple. Even if we had any individual, personal reasons to suppose that particular leading comrades, or all of them collectively, could be expected to intervene in such a situation in a nonfactional way -- in a way aimed at restoring the integrity of the Party rather than at embarrassing opponents in the International tendency struggle -- the Party leadership left us not the narrowest principled bridge to them. For they had requested and gotten instructions to utilize any information or opinions we might offer them as weapons in the IATF's factional war. Under these circumstances, had we turned to any SWP leading bodies, we would in no sense whatever have been simply rank-and-filers bringing to the attention of the Party leadership a situation which urgently required their loyal intervention, however harsh it might be; we would have been simply and solely informers for the IATF wing of the SWP.

The way the Party leadership, having selected its moment, finally did intervene confirms that from an immediately practical point of view, too, we were wise not to violate that consideration.

We think the struggle we conducted within the IT, as well as our withdrawal from it when that became necessary -- along-

side the larger number of comrades who share our general conceptions but did not leave when we did -- helped to counteract the incorrect responses within the IT to the IMT factionalization of the Party.

However that may be, the decisive role in reversing this process was played by the central IMT leadership.

To have recognized that there was such a reversal, it wasn't necessary to have had private conversations with individual ITers -- as we had the opportunity to do -- and thus to have learned of the careful rethinking going on within the IT of those central questions: the character of the Party, the unity of the International, the function of the tendency. The attachments to the report of the CC itself offer ample evidence of this re-evaluation: above all the willingness of the conference to adopt in practice the positions outlined by the IMT that were apparently in sharp contradiction to all those false conceptions that, to judge from the IT discussion documents, had been gaining ground; and also the decline, following the May conference, in the number of reported activities by ITers that were in any way provocative or could conceivably be regarded as involving breaches of discipline.

The May IT conference was in reality just the opposite of what the CC claims it was. It was not the meeting that launched the IT as a "rival party." It was the meeting that halted any drift towards a split on the part of IT comrades.

But this turn could not be completed overnight. Contrary to a widespread myth -- the myth of the existence of a super-disciplined IMT secret faction -- the IT comrades' lips and tongues and arms and legs are not moved by strings that stretch from Brussels or Paris to Chicago and Houston. Only through a process of intense discussion between leading comrades of the IMT and comrades of the IT could the centrifugal forces be totally defeated and could this turn be consummated with the IT completely homogenous with respect to the questions of the nature of the Party, the unity of the International, and the functions of the tendency.

It is thus very simply a slander when the PC charges the IMT Bureau with complicity in any plot to split the SWP. Rather, the IMT Bureau intervened in the only way open to it to reverse any drift towards a split. It utilized its substantive authority. This authority over the IT comrades derives, of course, largely from the leading IMT comrades' stature as the main articulators of the political current to which the IT adheres and from their stature as leaders of the International and of various national sections. But in no small measure, too, this authority derives simply from the self-induced collapse of the authority of the SWP leadership as a party leadership. The IMT Bureau utilized this authority to do everything it could to offer the SWP leadership the chance to recover its lost authority, by getting the IT comrades once again to accept the discipline of the SWP freely and unambiguously.

And for this, the comrades of the IMT Bureau are accused of complicity in a plot to split the SWP.

To summarize:

On August 9, 1973, the SWP leadership dealt a first massive blow at the integrity of the Party when it violated the principle that demands strict organizational distinction between faction and party. The inevitable consequences of that violation of principle began to unfold in the form of the development of certain elements of a drift towards a split among supporters of the IMT in the SWP. Then, just at the moment when, thanks to the intervention of the IMT leadership, this process had been reversed, the SWP leadership again massively assaulted the integrity of the Party by an action that objectively imposes the LTF platform as the programmatic foundation of the SWP: It expelled the great majority of supporters of the International Majority's political positions under a procedure strictly implying the expulsions to be programmatic while using a formula of expulsion strongly insinuating just that. At the same time, it slanderously accused the majority of the leadership of the International of complicity in a plot to split the SWP.

Under these circumstances, it is hard to see how there can be even the beginning of the restoration of the badly mutilated integrity of the Party, of the reestablishment of that standard of political conduct which is Party loyalty, and of the recovery of the authority the Party leadership must have if it is to lead the Party and not merely a faction, without these first steps:

a) The speedy reintegration of all those IT comrades who are prepared to commit themselves to abide by the constitution and organizational discipline of the SWP and the democratic-centralist norms of the world Trotskyist movement;

b) A clear reaffirmation in practice by the SWP leadership of the principle of the distinction between party and faction;

c) The retraction by the SWP leadership of its slanderous accusations against the majority of the leadership of the Fourth International.

Whatever the intentions of the PC, these expulsions can only seriously endanger the unity of the International.

This is so, first of all, because the most brutally obvious interpretation of these assaults on the integrity of the Party is that at some point in the unfolding of the international tendency struggle the LTF leadership of the SWP decided that a split in the International was necessary and that these actions are merely the maneuvers required to consummate that split. This interpretation may well appear to many comrades in the world movement to be the only possible one -- and with considerable plausibility.

The timing of the PC's July 4 action confers on it an especially provocative character. It came just at the moment when the dangerous drift of a part of the IT had been reversed but before that turn had yet been consolidated. It will thus inevitably appear to many comrades in the world movement that the LTF leadership of the SWP wants to produce that "prosplit wing" of the IMT it has talked so much about, as a step in a plan to split the International while attempting through a maneuver to shift the blame for the split onto the IMT.

In a more immediate organizational sense, too, these expulsions can only be highly dangerous. To throw a group of comrades who agree with the International Majority out of the SWP with the false allegation that they had formed a rival party in practice to provoke them, indeed to dare them, to go public, to set up shop with a public forum, a leaflet or a newspaper. It is to encourage the revival of that dynamic that in the years before the last congress led to splits in almost every country where there were substantial numbers of supporters of each of the big tendencies in the International. Fortunately so far as we know, all of the comrades of the IT -- no doubt with the firm encouragement of the IMT leaders -- have kept their heads and refused to be provoked as yet.

Despite all this, we still aim to convince the decisive section of the Party that the International Majority has not broken programmatically with Trotskyism or, short of that, that the political differences have reached such a depth and clarity as to justify a split. We hope to win the LTF comrades away from a course that would lead to an unprincipled split in the International. We hope that these assaults on the integrity of the Party are the result of serious errors of judgment, not of any intention to split the International (although it is impossible to explain errors of such magnitude without assuming a degree of factional blindness and a certain willingness to play brinkmanship with the unity of the International for the sake of factional gain).

Needless to say, we hold the opinion that the PC's decree expelling the 69 IT comrades is an outrage, an act devoid of any legitimacy. But we do not see that this action by the PC offers any grounds to alter the essential views we defended inside the IT. Especially now, moreover, loyalty to the Fourth International and to the SWP seems to us to require that all sides avoid contributing, in any conceivable way, to any exacerbation of the present crisis in the International. Thus, despite the illegitimacy of the PC's action, we are maintaining strict discipline in this as in all other matters. In particular, we are conducting ourselves in all personal relations with the expelled comrades strictly in accordance with Article VIII, Section 8, of the SWP Constitution.

Comradely,

s/Berta Langston

s/Bob Langston

s/Jim Morgan

s/Ralph Levitt

s/Celia Stodola

s/Peter Graumann

s/Alan Wald

s/Gerard Guibet