

May 17, 1974

To National Committee members of the LTF

Dear Comrades,

Attached are seven items:

1. A letter from Walter (for the United Secretariat bureau) to the leadership of the PST, asking for information regarding the PST's reported participation in a meeting between Peron and eight "opposition" parties.

2. A letter from the Fracción Roja to the United Secretariat concerning this same question.

3. A translation of the joint declaration supposedly signed by all eight parties. The translation is from the March 22 issue of La Opinión, a major bourgeois daily in Buenos Aires.

4. A second letter from Walter (for the United Secretariat Bureau) to the PST leadership.

5. A letter from Arturo (for the PST) to Walter.

6. Walter's reply to Arturo's letter.

7. A statement adopted by a majority of the United Secretariat May 29, 1974.

Comradely,

Ed Shaw

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April 12, 1974

Political Bureau of the PST

Dear Comrades,

The Bureau of the United Secretariat has decided to propose to the next United Secretariat meeting to discuss the political evolution in Argentina. In addition, we received a letter from the PRT/Fraccion Roja which wants the United Secretariat to deal with your attendance to a meeting called by general Peron of representatives of all political parties, in order to strengthen the "institutionalization process" in your country.

We have sent you yesterday a copy of the letter received from the Fraccion Roja.

In order to enable us to discuss these matters on the basis of a full and contradictory information, we should like you to inform us in the way which you feel adequate about this question. In particular we should like to know:

- (a) for what reasons comrades Coral and Arturo were present at that meeting;
- (b) whether, as the bourgeois press alleges (see photocopy of "La Opinion" March 22, 1974) you signed a common declaration of 8 political parties;
- (c) whether you published any communique or public declaration in relation with that meeting;
- (d) whether, in any you did not sign said common declaration, you published a denial of this allegation.

Questions (c) and (d) cannot be answered by us on the basis of material in our possession, as we have received no issue of "Avanzada Socialista" nor any other communication from you since six weeks.

Please take into consideration that the next Un. Secr. meeting takes place on April 20-21, and that your answer should therefore come immediately here.

Fraternally yours,

For the Un. Secr. Bureau,

Walter.

To the United Secretariat of the Fourth International

Dear Comrades,

The Tenth World Congress adopted a resolution on the "Political Crisis and Revolutionary Perspectives in Argentina," which, in one section where it drew a critical balance sheet of the orientation and activity of the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores, included a specific negative evaluation of the PST leadership's habit of going to the Government Palace to explain to a bourgeois government its views on the evolution of the capitalist economy, the university reform bill, etc. No reference to Leninist realpolitik can justify this kind of "respectful and constructive dialogue," or this kind of "platform" with a government which, along with its Peronist demagogy, has adopted a clearly repressive policy contrary to the interests of the Argentine working class.

It turns out that while the World Congress was meeting, the PST leadership was repeating this kind of operation, which is worthy of Social Democrats but contrary to the principles and the tradition of our International, to explain to the present government that the Fourth International had nothing to do with the attack on the Azul barracks, an action that was carried out by the ERP. We think that this kind of defender is not helping the Fourth International.

But our indignation overflowed when we saw a report in the press about the PST leaders Juan Carlos Coral and Arturo Gómez participating in a delegation of bourgeois and reformist "politicians" headed by an enemy of the working class like Ricardo Balbin that visited Peron. Ironically, Gómez was the reporter for the LTF on Argentina in the Tenth World Congress. The character of the meeting and its objectives are made absolutely clear by the statement that was issued unanimously by this group of "politicians." The objective was the defense of bourgeois democracy, of the existing democracy, of this bourgeois state and the so-called process of institutionalism (the restoration of constitutional government) by which the bourgeoisie is trying to overcome its political crisis by exacting greater sacrifice from, and imposing repression on, the workers. We think that this is incompatible with our objectives of destroying the bourgeois state and replacing it with a workers government. We think this is incompatible with the program of the Fourth International. We think that it is grotesque to go on talking in this way to a government that is directing the terror of parapolice gangs, trampling on the very democratic freedoms that it claimed in the electoral campaign to defend. We think that the place for Trotskyist militants is not with the gang of reactionaries, exploiters, and traitors, but on the other side of the line--in the struggles that our working class and our people are waging against the plans of the bourgeoisie, its Social Pact, its repressive laws, its terrorist escalation.

Concerned about strict defense of the 10th World Congress line and the rules of democratic centralism, we think that the United Secretariat must take a public stand against this kind of an attitude on the part of an organization that enjoys the status

of a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International, and as a result casts on the entire International the opprobrium of its opportunistic practices, which are unworthy of revolutionary Marxism. The latest episode we have described is of extreme gravity and cannot be left without a public answer in which the Secretariat disassociates itself from the attitude of the PST, which has sunk into legalistic considerations to the point of breaking with the principles and traditions of revolutionary Marxism.

We attach the press clippings on the episode we mentioned.

Fraternally,

A. for the Political Bureau
of the Fraccion Roja

(The following is translated from the March 22, 1974 issue of La Opinión.)

The eight parties of the center-left that met yesterday with the president issued the following communique after the conference.

"Those who attended the conference with the president reiterated their fundamental aim of sparing no effort to maintain and consolidate the process of institutionalization in the country (that is, return to legal, constitutional forms of rule), under the rule of democracy and by applying the principles of pluralism and constructive dialogue.

"They voiced these views because they had noted with increasing disquiet the development of disruptive factors affecting various expressions of the country's institutional life, despite the broad mandate with which the government took office.

"In the name of their parties, which retain their distinct points of view and independence, they declared their desire to see the struggle for national liberation and social justice develop in the democratic framework described above, and expressed their view that the essential precondition for such a struggle going forward was that all Argentines be able to freely defend their programs and their own evaluations of economic and social facts, as well as their own judgments about the actions of the government.

"The difficult moments that lie ahead for the republic, as a consequence of confronting the powers that have long held it in subjection, will be overcome by the united action of the sectors that respect the will of the majority of the people that was expressed in the elections to seek liberation, and which jointly guarantee their right to continue speaking out in the future in order to make this will effective, to end the burdens of dependency and turn over to the workers the benefits of the wealth created by their efforts.

"As a part of this process, we have not opposed carrying out these objectives. The development of a genuine federal system in the country, the integration of Latin America, solidarity with the oppressed peoples of the world, and the struggle against imperialism and the oligarchy can only be achieved by the creative agreements that emerge from the full exercise of democracy in all fields, in order to define clearly the political line in economic, social, trade-union, and cultural affairs.

"Because of the representativeness of the participants and the development of its substance, the meeting must be considered a concrete step designed to bring about a pooling of forces to assure the course of institutionalization in the channels voted for by the people. All the participants recognized the risks involved in the undertaking the country demanded, while agreeing--over and above their respective points of view on the deepening and the rate of the process of change--on the vital necessity for carrying it out.

"It could be regarded as an especially positive outcome of the meeting that it in itself represented an explicit statement by the country supporting the process of institutionalization at all levels and at the same time condemning all those who are trying to interfere with this process in one way or another. (This apparently refers to the purge of provincial governors, in particular the Cordoba coup.)

"Pursuant to these common positions, the participants stressed--agreeing with previous public statements of the president--how counterproductive and dangerous any attempt would be to blur the distinction between the state and the party apparatus or to use the state apparatus to intervene in internal party struggles that should be resolved in their natural course. They stressed how negative it was for officials to use their power to influence these internal struggles, injecting elements that have disturbed and dismayed public opinion.

"Finally, the participants agreed on the need for constant and easy communication and for assuring precise information on the moves and objectives of the government and of the political forces in every case in order to block rumors and false versions which in themselves are a disruptive element that plays into the hands of reaction.

"Those who are trying to wreck the constitutional system or hope for the appearance of circumstances that would permit a new reactionary adventure; those who are trying to manipulate sections of the government in order to gain an influence over future alternatives; those who are promoting totalitarian or corporatist practices, who agree ideologically with the fascistoid demands and the interests of the multinational corporations that are being pressed on our country from every side; all these elements must realize that the nation has met here and, reaching fundamental agreement, has given its answer."

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May 8, 1974.

Political Bureau of the PST

Dear Comrades,

We recall our letter of April 12, 1974 concerning the meeting of cdes Coral and Arturo with general Peron, letter to which we have not received an answer till this day.

We want to inform you that the next meeting of the United Secretariat, which will be held on May 29 and 30, will probably discuss this matter. We would urge you to send us a detailed answer to the questions raised in our April 12 letter before that Un/ Secr. meeting.

You have of course the right to send a comrade to participate in that discussion of the Un. Secr. and we would welcome such a participation.

We also remind you that you have not replied to a previous letter of the Un. Secr./Bureau concerning your payment of dues to the International.

Fraternally yours,

For the Un. Secr. Bureau,

Walter.

Copy to JH

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Buenos Aires, May 23, 1974

Dear Walter,

Reasons which are publicly known and the organizational consequences they mean for us make it impossible for us to attend (as we had planned) the meeting of the U.S. Thus we feel it appropriate and necessary to postpone consideration of our tactic of attending meetings with the Argentine government (with other political parties) until we can be present. We are committed to attending the next meeting of the U.S. to be held.

Nonetheless, cde. Livio will have gotten to you part of the documentation you requested along with his oral report of the meeting with us. As a memory-aid, we repeat that report. We have not signed either that or any other document with the parties who attended those meetings. I repeat: not with any other party. The only thing involved is an error by the director of our newspaper who repeated the reports of other organs of the press. As we said to Livio, we were not planning to center our report on that episode since *Politica Obrera* had attacked us publicly for it, and our defense would appear to be a *posteriori*. Even more so since our own paper had published the tale, tacitly approving it by so doing and defending it explicitly in an absurd polemic.

To clarify the problem we awaited patiently our turn to speak on television for two hours to the whole country. On that occasion, cde. Coral reported, in the first place, that we had not signed any document, nor had we turned over any document to the government. In the second place, he explained that there had been an error by the director of our newspaper in repeating the false news reports from the bourgeois press.

We used this means of communication, taking advantage of the fact that it was a television program where the most important Argentine politicians have spoken and that it reaches an audience of several million people. This gave us the assurance that if what cde. Coral said was false, the people mentioned would have denied it immediately. The fact is that no one denied what Coral said, much less those mentioned.

We attach the summary made by a commercial magazine of the program in question. It is useful for corroborating the importance of that interview and also as a proof of our principled politics at such meetings, since Coral reported extensively to the people on our position. Since in this summary the denial by Coral of our supposed signature on the document is not mentioned, we place at the disposal of any comrade who comes to Argentina the complete tape of the television program.

However, if it is possible to delay consideration of the precise tactical and subtactical aspects of our frontal and intransigent fight against the government and against any attempt at a popular front, it is impossible to delay on an absolutely preremptory question: the U.S. must organize an international campaign of denunciation of the fascist, bureaucrat, and government attacks against our party, the other parties on the left,

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and the class-struggle tendencies (in the unions).

On that question it is obvious that not a moment should be lost. Thus we are very surprised at the fact that you are pressuring us so persistently for the documentation on a tactical question and don't ask us for any documentation in view of the attacks of which we have been the object. Nor has any demonstration of solidarity reached us from the United Secretariat.

Finally, in relation to the other problem that you raise, of financial contributions. All we have to say is that we sense a contradiction between what was agreed and what you are now asking us. The meeting you will have soon with our delegate will be a good opportunity to complete arrangements in writing on this old problem.

Trotskyist greetings,

s/Arturo

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June 3, 1974.

To the Political Bureau of the PST.

Dear comrades,

We have received your letter of May 23, 1974, on Saturday June 1, i.e. after the United Secretariat meeting of May 29-30. At that United Secretariat meeting we adopted a statement on the visit of comrades Coral and Arturo to Peron, and the statements published with that respect by Avanzada Socialista. We decided however to keep this statement internal (it will only be circulated to members of Central Committees of sections and sympathizing organizations), so as to enable you to state your case before the leadership of the movement before any public criticism is printed.

We add to the present letter the text of the statement and of the accompanying letter sent to the leadership of the sections.

The next meeting of the United Secretariat will take place on July 3-4, 1974. We hope you will be able to attend that meeting and to clarify in a satisfactory way the problems raised by the meetings with Peron and the issue of Avanzada Socialista of March 28.

The explanations contained in your letter of May 23 leave us perplexed however. You say that the PST did not sign any declaration with the other parties participating in the meetings with Peron, and that the editor of your paper made an "error" referring to that signature on the basis of "certain press organs".

However, the issue of Avanzada Socialista of March 28 does not only contain the information about this alleged signature of the joint statement. It contains also:

- a) the full text of that statement;
- b) an editorial defending the signature;
- c) a letter by a "comrade F" mildly criticizing the signature;
- d) a long political defence of the signature in answer to that criticism.

It is hard to believe that this whole political debate covering several pages of Avanzada Socialista was based only on the "echo of the report of some newspapers" and was due to a error of your editor. Doesn't your Political Bureau exercise some control over that editor? Didn't he contact your Political Bureau before answering the criticisms of "comrade F" and raising a series of political issues of the greatest political and programmatic importance?

Our attention is also drawn to the fact that the PRT(U), which collaborates closely with your party, and one of whose main leaders is a leading member of your party, came out, in public, shortly before the issue of the common statement with the other political parties visiting Peron arose, in favor of a bloc with bourgeois parties for the organization of "free elections". Was there also some mistake by an editor involved? Is this pure coincidence? Or are the positions defended by the issue of

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Avanzada Socialista of March 28 the political positions of the leadership of the PST, in which case we have to point out that they are in complete opposition with the tradition of Trotsky and the Fourth International on this question?

Whatever this may be, you explain that you found it unwise to rectify your position in the pages of Avanzada Socialista, as comrade Coral had the opportunity to speak before television, and could thereby rectify the false information before a larger audience. We have read the summary of comrade Coral's speech in the magazine "Asi" (issue of May 14, 1974). This could only increase our perplexity: this speech does not contain a single word of rectification concerning the PST's alleged non-signing of the common declaration of the eight parties.

The least one could therefore conclude is, that in order to eliminate the impression created before the Argentine masses and especially the vanguard that the trotskyist movement has changed its traditional opposition to any "bloc" with bourgeois parties, including for the alleged "defence of democratic liberties" (and in the March 28 issue of Avanzada Socialista those liberties are identified with the institutions of the bourgeois-democratic State, which makes the matter even worse), Avanzada Socialista should publish a clear rectification of this error and set the record straight as to what is the position of trotskyism with that respect. That would then end the problem for us.

We understand perfectly that you are under heavy attack to-day by terrorist forces of the right, and we are indignant at the murders committed against PST comrades. We are ready to start immediately an international campaign of denunciation of these crimes, and of defence of the PST against right-wing terrorism. Please send us immediately a draft statement for publication, and all the necessary information (we do not receive Avanzada Socialista regularly since several months); send it to the address Gisela Scholtz, Boîte Postale 1166, 1000 Brussels, Belgium, not as a registred letter (which takes much longer).

But precisely in the light of these crimes committed against your comrades, with the complicity and under the cover of the peronist government, the declaration of the 8 parties and other material published in Avanzada Socialista of March 28, are all the graver, because they participate objectively in a campaign of mystification and cover up about the real nature of those who quide and cover the murderers!

As to the final paragraph of your letter, we cannot understand it. The question of payment of dues is independent of the recognition or not as a section, or of the level of political debate going on between the leadership of the International and a section or sympathizing organization. In order to have rights in the movement, you have to implement your duties. The rights you exercised fully, before, during and after the world congress. We could expect that you should at least exercise your elementary duty of making a contribution in relation with the membership which you claimed, and whose vote was fully counted at the world congress.

Fraternally yours,
For the United Secretariat/Bureau
Walter.

The following statement was adopted by a majority of the United Secretariat at the meeting of May 29-30, 1974.

* * *

On March 22 Argentine President Juan Peron met with representatives from 8 parties -- at their request: Union Civica Radical, Partido Revolucionario Cristiano, PST, Partido Socialista Popular, Partido Intransigente, UDELPA, Partido Comunista, Democracia Progresista. This meeting wasn't an isolated incident: it is part of a series of initiatives Peron has taken aimed at "normalizing" relations with the officially recognized parties. But the March 22 interview was the most significant to date because at the end the parties published a common declaration.

Among other things the declaration stated: "Those who attended the conference with the president reiterated their fundamental aim of sparing no effort to maintain and consolidate the process of institutionalization in the country (that is, return to legal, constitutional forms of rule), under the rule of democracy and by applying the principles of pluralism and constructive dialogue. ...

"The difficult moments that lie ahead for the republic, as a consequence of confronting the powers that have long held it in subjection, will be overcome by the united action of the sectors that respect the will of the majority of the people that was expressed in the elections to seek liberation, and which jointly guarantee their right to continue speaking out in the future in order to make this will effective, to end the burdens of dependency and turn over to the workers the benefits of the wealth created by their efforts.

"As a part of this process, we have not opposed carrying out these objectives....

"Because of the representativeness of the participants and the development of its substance, the meeting must be considered a concrete step designed to bring about a pooling of forces to assure the course of institutionalization in the channels voted for by the people. All the participants recognized the risks involved in the undertaking the country demanded, while agreeing--over and above their respective points of view on the deepening and the rate of the process of change -- on the vital necessity for carrying it out....

"Those who are trying to wreck the constitutional system or hope for the appearance of circumstances that would permit a new reactionary adventure; those who are trying to manipulate sections of the government in order to gain an influence over future alternatives; those who are promoting totalitarian or corporativist practices, who agree ideologically with the fascistoid demands and the interests of the multinational corporations that are being pressed on our country from every side; all these elements must realize that the nation has met here and, reaching fundamental agreement, has given its answer."

The declaration, which was published in all the daily newspapers on March 22, was reprinted in the March 28 - April 5 issue of Avanzada Socialista, organ of the PST. Avanzada, however,

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published not only the communique; it added two commentaries in the form of editorials.

After reviewing the escalation of violence on the part of the extreme right, which culminated in the coup in Cordoba by the chief of police Navarro, the first editorial explains that "participating in the discussion with the president of the republic" was "a concrete act in defense of the democratic freedoms heroically conquered by the workers and popular mobilizations that unfolded after the Cordobazo." It went on to explain that the "defense of constitutional stability" didn't have to coincide with political defense of the government and it drew the following conclusion: "It is extraordinarily important that the eight political parties have come together to ask for a meeting to pose the problem of institutionalization. But as always, we continue to assert that democratic openings will be defended above all through mobilizations as the struggles of Acindar and the bank workers show us. That is why we ceaselessly demand that unity to defend democratic liberties be expressed in action, beginning with a large public meeting of all the political parties and youth groups and all the worker and student organizations." The same call for a joint meeting with the bourgeois parties is repeated at the end of the second editorial, which preaches the necessity of "concrete and flexible responses at each conjuncture in the class struggle."

The PST leadership must have realized that its decision to participate in a meeting that gave a cover to Peron's "normalization" program; to jointly sign a document with bourgeois parties, including the Unión Cívica Radical, a traditional bourgeois party and moreover today the bourgeoisie's main political force aside from Peronism; to announce "fundamental agreement" between all the signers concerning the defence of the process of institutionalization and the acceptance of "projects" approved by "the people" (in practice, projects outlined by Campora and Peron); to put forward the thesis that the struggle against fascism can and must be carried out with parties representing the class enemy -- the PST leadership must have realized that these would produce a reaction among the militants. That's why in the same issue of Avanzada Socialista they published a letter signed by "comrade F," which arrived at the editor's desk surprisingly fast, and a response that took almost two pages.

The letter seems to admit collaboration with bourgeois parties: in effect while falsifying a quotation from Trotsky -- referring to the necessity of a united front with the Social Democracy at the beginning of the 1930s in Germany -- it affirms that the "united front is admissible even with the class enemy and with the devil's grandmother." But the author criticizes signing the statement of the eight parties because, according to him, the PST helped Peron reinforce his prestige and propped up a bourgeois government that was on the point of collapsing. The editorial response clarifies the heart of the question. It states that the starting point must be "the fundamental fact: a semi-fascist coup overturned a provincial government, this coup was not an isolated thing but represents a step in the escalation of the extreme right, which is on the offensive and hasn't the least intention of stopping." The conclusion is that in the given context what must be done is not fight to overturn the government

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or the institutions but, on the contrary, defend the "democratic institutionalization" and that to bring this about it is correct to make a pact with bourgeois parties by signing common declarations and calling for joint demonstrations.

The PST leaders have in the past criticized the Stalinist conceptions of a popular front and they formally reiterate their criticism in the issue of Avanzada Socialista in question. But at the same time, they supported the Frente Amplio in Uruguay, headed by the bourgeois representative Seregni. Today they sign a joint declaration with bourgeois parties and make an appeal for a common action with them. To justify this ultra-opportunist attitude they use essentially the same argument the Stalinists put forward in the mid-1930s to justify the popular front line, namely that it is o.k. to make an alliance with the bourgeoisie or so-called democratic sectors to meet the fascist danger. With this the PST leadership takes another step in its evolution and openly breaks with the revolutionary Marxist concept of the proletarian united front, which is based on the Leninist conception of the Third International and reaffirmed by Trotsky.

At the same time, the PST leadership forgets the fundamental distinction between democratic liberties which the workers movement demands and the structures of bourgeois democracy. By signing a document that praises the process of institutionalization of the country and by presenting themselves as "participants in this process of institutionalization" along with the bourgeois parties, the PST leadership contributes to the far-reaching mystification of Peron, to the pseudo-democratic farse the Argentine bourgeoisie has been playing for three years, and swallows whole the maneuver to present Peron as the guarantor of a "democracy" that embraces everyone -- except the organizations of the extreme right and extreme left (Peron has expressed himself clearly on this point). The expression used at several points by Avanzada Socialista -- dialogue with the president -- says much about the opportunist conceptions of the PST leadership.

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International -- which has always rejected any form of class collaboration and has constantly counterposed the conception of a workers or workers and peasant united front to the reformist and Stalinist conception of collaboration with the "democratic" parties; which believes that the task of revolutionaries in Argentina is, while taking advantage of the margins of legality or semi-legality, to denounce the fraudulent operation that started with the GAN and was developed by Peron, and to fight without compromise or truce against the existing government and the bourgeois state -- declares that it bears no responsibility for the PST's opportunistic and rightist attitude, which it considers as being in contradiction with the concepts and tradition of Trotskyism and which it condemns in the sharpest manner.

May 29, 1974