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May 18, 1975

From: Marcel

Dear Mary-Alice,

Since Comrade Francois writes quickly, you will receive this letter several days after his.

The Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency (TLT) of the LTF is in favor of Comrade Francois joining the LTF. I shall describe the situation for you briefly.

The first time we discussed it with Francois, at the beginning of the year, we immediately realized that it was essential to collaborate with him, in view of the fact that our political ideas converged on important points. On the other hand, we had two very important disagreements with him:

--on the LTF. Francois believed that his disagreements with the PST (which are expressed in his letter) and on what he calls the "expulsion of the IT" would prevent him from joining the LTF.

--on Belgium, a difference on the Christian workers movement. Francois considered the Christian trade union federation, the CSC--like the CFDT in France--to be a bourgeois organization, with all that follows with respect to the united front tactic, the workers government slogan, etc.

These problems are now being ironed out. Francois continues to hold his positions on defending bourgeois democratic institutions against fascist coups, and in doing so he joins the comrades of the Liga Comunista of Spain, members of the LTF. The difference over "the expulsion of the IT," which Francois holds was "entirely justified by their factional activities," but which he disapproves for tactical reasons relating to the discussion in Europe, should not be an obstacle to his joining the Faction.

From the outset we have explained to Francois that any "third tendency" position was politically inconsistent and therefore untenable. We have stressed that maintaining hardened "third tendencies" held out the danger of serious political deviations (e.g., the Kompass positions on social-democracy).

Although he holds different opinions on the IMT and on the LTF's function than we do, Francois is ready to join the Faction. On April 25 he wrote to us:

"I have reflected at length on the international problems, and arrived at the conclusion that I can no longer remain outside the LTF. The position I have held until now only reinforces the IMT, because the forces that oppose the majority have been scattered. The LTF is the only tendency in the Fourth International that puts political debate on Trotskyist grounds in op-

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position to the majority's Pabloite centrism. Correcting the present line can come about only through the LTF. . . . What we must do is build an alternative leadership in Europe, and the failure of the third international tendency is proof that we must start with the LTF."

With respect to Europe, I believe that we won't have trouble convincing Francois that our opposition to the IMT's European document was not inspired exclusively by fear of "a geographical extension of the guerrilla strategy to Europe." Your document on that question has already proved that, and the TLT in the LRT for the most part will continue to conduct a debate against the theories of "instrumentalizing the new vanguard" and an "adequate instrument," as it has done so in the past.

In summary, it must be said that Francois agrees with the LTF platform. We think his application should be accepted.

That leaves the Belgian problem. The last time I discussed it with Francois, he maintained his positions on the CSC. Our TLT in the LRT was in favor of Francois joining the LTF. But all the same, we decided to ask your opinion on the problem of being in the same international faction while disagreeing on how to characterize an organization that includes half the Belgian workers. This was not a negligible problem, since it made it almost impossible for us to be in the same tendency within the LRT!

This problem has been resolved. In a letter of May 15, Francois wrote to me:

"As for the question of the CSC, I finally concur with your analysis. In Trotsky's analyses, he never spoke of bourgeois or workers trade unions; he just assessed the degree to which the unions were integrated into the bourgeois state. That is one of the differences between trade unions and political parties: the former are susceptible to being reformed, to becoming independent of the bourgeois state (and for that reason it is impossible to categorize them as bourgeois or working class), while parties exist to carry out a certain political program, and to defend a certain class or social layer."

Thus there is no longer any obstacle to Francois joining the LTF and the TLT-LRT.

Of course, there is still the more general problem of what I shall call the Lambertist influences Francois has been under. They show up in his characterization of the IMT as "Pabloites" and in his remarks on the "destructive forces" of capitalism.

Francois also has a tendency--as do the PST and the LC of Spain--to consider the LTF to be the "true international," with which we do not entirely agree.

I am not going to discuss these points of disagreement here. Ultimately, that is not the point of this letter. We shall discuss them with Francois in the LTF and in the TLT-LRT. So I am asking

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you to reply to Francois, after consulting with other members of the Steering Committee, as quickly as possible, if only by a very short form letter if you wish to take more time to reply to him concerning the differences mentioned in his letter.

We are now preparing for the third Congress of the LRT, to be held November 8-11. In the weeks to come I shall get you our "Theses for a political reorientation," which encompass the points on which we will fight at the Congress. The discussions with Francois have already been very fruitful for editing the document. I shall ask him to send you a very interesting document he has written on the workers government.

Because we have not had any further opportunity to discuss it, I can just tell you this: I now totally agree with the SWP position on sending troops to Boston. Your letter removed my last doubts and was of great educational benefit. That was a lesson in the concrete application of a revolutionary line.

Revolutionary greetings,
Marcel

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May 21, 1975

From: Francois Massion

Comrade,

I have just received a letter from Marcel asking me to send you a document I wrote on the workers government. You will find it enclosed. One part is still under discussion, on concretizing this formulation in Belgium. I had only been in Belgium one month when I proposed "a CP/SP government." That will very likely not be included; for a slogan to be transitional, it must be able to mobilize broad masses of workers, and it must appear credible. But in our country the CP has only a few thousand members. Moreover, that formula leaves out the CSC. I agree with Marcel's (and the majority's) formulation of "a PS/FGTB/CSC government."

In another connection, I see that in the letter he sent you he speaks of the (bad) Lambertist influences I have been under. I was not aware before that the IWF did not use the term "Pabloite." I was using it in connection with the analysis developed in my last letter, according to which the origin of the current debate is to be found in the 1953 split. As for the passage on the destructive forces, I recognize that I wrote it with S. Just's analyses of this subject in mind, which seemed correct to me. But I would rather pursue this discussion following your response.

Communist greetings,

Gaston

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Brussels
May 14, 1975

From: Francois Massion
To: Mary-Alice Waters

Dear Comrade,

Excuse me for writing to you in French, but I speak no English. Marcel has undoubtedly informed you of the purpose of this letter: my request to join the LTF. I can send you a more detailed biography, but to sum it up, I have been a member of the French section of the Fourth International since May 1973, without ever being active before then. During the international debate I belonged to the "third international tendency" (CLC) [Contre le Courant--Against the Stream] and at the last national congress of the FCR, to T4 [Tendency 4]. I have been in Belgium since the end of December, and plan to remain here. Up to this point my position was rather ambiguous: against the IMT, against the idea of leaving the International, against the third international tendency's plans and also against the LTF on account of my differences with it, which were in large part due to the "wall of silence" erected by the United Secretariat majority around the faction's positions, and to the undemocratic propaganda against the SWP's alleged rightist deviations, with the help of slanders heaped on it (the latest being that the SWP had attacked strike pickets!). In view of the fact that my position can only strengthen the majority and sow illusions regarding a third force in the international, and that one never finds an organization that totally suits him, I have decided to join the faction.

I agree with the faction's platform as it is set forth in International Internal Bulletin no. 29 (December, 1973). Beyond that platform, I have read your document on Europe, J. Hansen's "The Underlying Differences in Method," and the world political resolution as it appears in Quatrieme Internationale, no. 16/17. My criticisms have to do with that resolution and with various positions the faction has taken.

1. Concerning the world political resolution:

The part on "the maturing of the objective conditions" (p. 90) contains no reference to the destructive forces, which leaves room for the interpretation that capitalism, although it may experience increasingly frequent economic crises, has not completely exhausted its resources and can still develop humanity's productive forces. As it stands, this part of the resolution resembles the Kautskyist theory of "neo-capitalism." If it is true that there are no hopeless situations for capitalism, and that it will not fall by itself, the way in which it "reestablishes" itself each time should not be theorized as capitalism's ability to transcend its own contradictions. It played its "progressive economic role" until the beginning of this century. Since then, it has be-

come an obstacle to the development of the productive forces. The fact that production of one substance or another has increased in absolute figures proves nothing; the growth of the means of production brings with it the growth of the destructive forces of the capitalist system (including destruction of the chief productive force, human labor, through unemployment). Trotsky began the Transitional Program with the fact that the productive forces have ceased to grow; Mandel repudiates this basic concept with the theory of "neo-capitalism," a pale imitation of Kautsky's "super-imperialism." I remind you of several passages from the Communist Manifesto, which confirms and explains the theory of capitalism's destructive forces. "The history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations. . . . In these crises a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed. . . . there is too much civilisation, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce." Therefore, I think that it was indispensable to raise the question of capitalism's destructive forces, not only because this concept is part of the founding program of our movement, but also because we must destroy all illusions, internal as well as external, about capitalism's ability to overcome its own contradictions. (Wasn't it Pablo who spoke of "centuries of transition"?!)

Another weakness of the resolution is found in its analysis of the deformed workers states. (The resolution uses the ambiguous term "bureaucratized workers states," which leaves room for no distinction between deformed and degenerated workers states.) The one example that is developed a little further is that of Cuba. If the process of permanent revolution in Cuba is correctly analyzed, doubts must be raised about the nature of the Cuban leadership and its objective limitations. The text speaks of the "eventuality" (!) of a "degeneration" (!) (you will find the entire quotation at the bottom of the first column of page 91). Cuba might "degenerate"?! That would mean that the Cuban proletariat holds political power now, that it is organized in its own organs of power (soviets), that there is no bureaucracy in Cuba and that, in the event that there should be one, it would not in any case hold political power, since the resolution speaks of the eventuality of Cuba's "degeneration." In fact, we must analyze Cuba as a deformed workers state, that is, one that never experienced workers democracy. On this subject, the resolution lacks an explanation of the insurmountable limitations of such political leaderships: at best they can only lead the proletariat to a society in which, although they may expropriate capital, the proletariat will not have political power. The logical conclusion is that we must work at building sections of the Fourth International in these countries. Why doesn't the resolution say so? It simply states that soviets are needed in Cuba. But who will set them up, who can propose building them and defend a correct line within them

if not a section of the Fourth International? The resolution leaves a question mark hanging over the possibility of Castro's team establishing such structures.

The third, and next to last, criticism I would like to make of the resolution is the very weak attention given to the question of the workers united front (a total of eight lines in the entire resolution). You know Trotsky better than I do, and you certainly are aware of the enormous importance he placed on this tactic (as did the entire Communist International in its early years) for party building. It is important whether the sections be large, medium-sized, or very small. For small sections he certainly doesn't foster illusions about revolutionary groups directing mass actions in this oblique fashion; but he sees this tactic as a means of avoiding being eliminated from the working class movement. The majority pretends to apply this tactic of the workers united front in forming "revolutionary fronts" (whether they call them that or something else) that aim to "win over the vanguard" on the basis of a centrist political program as the common denominator of various capitulations of "the mass vanguard," reflecting its political backwardness. Even if we can only reach part of the radicalized workers in the near future, we can teach them to turn toward their class brothers to meet the objective needs of the proletariat, only on the basis of the approach outlined in the workers united front. The majority's whole approach has its own consistent logic; on the other hand, a key element is lacking in the faction's resolution, that of the workers united front as a tactic of party building and a means of exposing the traditional leaderships on the basis of their refusal to take up the demands of the working class.

To finish with this document; the question of the Paris accords on Vietnam. I completely agree that the accords, as they were written, represented a betrayal of the interests of the Vietnamese proletariat. On the other hand, I think that they had to arrange a truce intended to allow the Vietnamese to catch their breath and to reorganize themselves. They had to benefit from their military advantage and from the crisis of the American army (as well as from the weight of the international solidarity movement) to impose a truce and the withdrawal of the U. S. troops. In France, some comrades were shouting, "The struggle of the Vietnamese people is invincible." That is true in an absolute sense; but it takes no account of the fact that the massive bombing of the North kept the Vietnamese economy from being organized beyond a certain economic level, the fact that the terms of assistance to the NLF resistance fighters were becoming more difficult, etc. If the accords that brought about the withdrawal of U. S. troops had not been signed, there might have been longer delays in liberating the country. In any event, I agree with saying that a revolutionary leadership worthy of the name would not have signed THOSE accords; but I think that others should have been proposed. France GARNIER, in the March 1975 issue of Liberation recalls that "the nine-point agreement achieved a very

important conquest for the Vietnamese people: the withdrawal of the troops." These are all my criticisms of this resolution; there are other points to be discussed, central to which is the tactic the faction adopted for the 10th World Congress.

2. Differences on other documents of the faction:

Here I want to develop my chief objection to the LTF. That concerns the "turn" of the 9th World Congress. To avoid any false disputes, I explicitly state that I completely agree with the criticism of the guerrilla line in Latin America, but at the same time I do not believe that it represents a turning point in the history of the Fourth International, any more than I believe it was correct to do battle over the possibility of "geographically" extending the guerrilla line to capitalist Europe. You have presented the essence of the majority's method as being seeking to apply the guerrilla warfare "strategy," first in Latin America, then in Europe. In reality, this did not represent the majority's method (and thus it was not a strategy, but simply a tactic); it was only the tactical application of a method you are familiar with: Pabloism. The Pabloites give up building the revolutionary party; they idealize the traditional leaderships of the working class by attributing to them a role they don't have (that of defending the minimal interests of the working class). They capitulate to every petty bourgeois current (the "new vanguard," whether it is named Ben Bella, Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, Ho Chi Minh, Mao or Charles Piaget) and give up the role of leading the working class in revolution (Jebracq's document, guerrilla warfare in Latin America, "victory to the NLF and the PRG!" "the Sorbonne, first liberated territory in France in 1968." For them, objective reality consists of "the capitalist regime and the Stalinist world"). I am not analyzing Pabloism at length, because you have known it since its beginning, but THAT is what the majority's strategy consists of, not the guerrilla "strategy." That is the reason why the Ninth World Congress did not represent a turn, but the Third Congress did. It merely applied tactically, at a given moment in the class struggle, the Pabloite method; at another point, the tactical application was "entrism sui generis." I am spelling out all this because I believe you have erred in centering your whole struggle on the geographical extension of guerrilla warfare to Europe. You have missed the target. In the current situation, that is by no means the danger menacing the Fourth International in Europe, and all the European members have felt that way. The LTF's criticisms did not hit home in Europe (except among very limited layers of militants) because in reality they represented "political fiction." This outcome is not astonishing if you begin with an analysis that the Ninth World Congress represented a turn (as if all was well until then) and the guerrilla line is a "strategy." What should have been done is very different: Pabloism's general method (whose essential traits are listed above) should have been exposed in order to illustrate the majority's different

analyses at the start. By reducing Pabloism to the guerrilla strategy, you appear to be disarmed when the majority does not apply it. Minority violence is one aspect of the adaptation to the preoccupations of the petty-bourgeois "new vanguard;" the other is setting up a "progressive front" in Belgium on a centrist program, and in France refusing to fight for a CP/SP government and struggling for a tendency in the unions that would only be organized around one part of the Transitional Program's axes. What I am proposing is not, as the Lambertists make it, the arbitrary demand for a debate on entrism sui generis and Pablo's line (besides, I think that you were entirely correct to reunify in 1963), but a debate on the essence of the Pabloite method (which cannot be reduced to guerrilla warfare). If this sort of battle is not joined, the function of the reunification will not be carried out.

As another point, there is the question of the PST; but my criticisms will be severely limited because the majority provides little information. The debate hinges on the question of whether defending democratic rights comes down to defending "democratic institutions." The PST says it does. Taking the example of the bourgeois parliament, the correct position should be that we defend the right to speak in it, but we do so in order to show that it must be destroyed. In no case do we defend that institution, even against fascism, because such a defense of a bourgeois institution would be, as Trotsky said, "a democratic noose fastened to the neck of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie's agents." The PST's error (which, among other conditions, could have ominous consequences if not corrected) lies in the fact that there is a separation between the struggle against the fascist danger and the struggle against the source of that danger, the capitalist system. The slogans that allow an effective struggle against fascism are precisely those that allow the swiftest destruction of the "democratic" institutions in order to replace them with organs of the workers movement. The PST's position, putting defense of the institutions on the same footing with defense of democratic rights, leaves the illusion that the continuation of democratic rights for the working class would be linked to those institutions. We should show just the opposite. For example, if the working class wants to ensure its right to meet and to organize, it should do so within the perspective of destroying the bourgeois system (including the laws that are supposed to "guarantee" their right to organize). Defending democratic rights and defending institutions are two actually antagonistic things; you can really only defend the rights if you fight

against the institutions. The PST's position explains it the opposite way and separates the struggle against fascism from the struggle against the "democratic" bourgeoisie.

In closing I would like to speak of the LTF's attitude since the Tenth World Congress: the expulsion of the IT, then the organization of the PRT in Portugal. As far as "principles" are concerned, the expulsion was completely justified by the IT's internal and external factional activities. But this decision has had several consequences. First, it increased tension in the International and the weight of split-minded currents, both internal and external (unfortunately, the Spartacists succeeded in France in picking up some fine members who were opposed to the IMT: Lesuer, then Lafitte). It managed to slow down the implantation of the faction in Europe, thanks to the IMT's hypocritical propaganda on the theme: "There is no internal democracy in the SWP, see how these apprentices of the Stalinists handle their internal debates." Instead a compromise should have been accepted; that would certainly have facilitated our implantation in Europe. In any case it would not have been the first time in history that this would have happened; remember Lenin's attitude toward the Bukharin faction at the time of the signing of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. They had even gone further than the IT; they were publishing their own paper. I think that there was room to accommodate the IT's excesses until the real splitters resigned on their own.

As for Moreno's PRT in Portugal, I totally fail to comprehend the advantage of the operation he has tried to pull off. It seems obvious to me that, in view of the political youthfulness of the LCI members and in view of the crisis they currently face for lack of cadres, there were enormous possibilities for work inside it. I won't mention the need to respect the agreements of the Tenth World Congress, which brings up the same question as the IT.

I have surveyed my differences with the Faction. They are certainly not final, in view of the lack of documentation available to me. I have not mentioned our areas of agreement, since that would only serve to fill up paper repeating the analyses published in the documents. In any event, whatever your decision as to my joining the Faction, I would certainly like you to respond to the different problems I have raised.

Communist greetings,
Gaston