

Buenos Aires, July 17, 1975

Dear Joe,

After the compañero left who was to deliver my letter replying to you I reread it and came to the conclusion that it was not sufficiently clear. I am afraid we may have given the impression that we are eager for a conciliation with you, underplaying differences and seeking a united front against the majority without paying sufficient attention to questions of principle. I say this because Mary-Alice's observation that we are not a united front against anyone and are in a principled faction formed on a clear program seems correct to me. The next faction meeting should provide a political-organizational example for the entire world Trotskyist movement. We should continue united if we are truly in agreement on a principled program on the Portuguese revolution. If not, it would be best to separate, more fraternally than ever, in order to facilitate coming together again after reality shows who was right. One part of this example should be a clear definition of the differences and separation of those that would justify a break -- the principled ones -- from those that do not justify a break

It has occurred to me that we probably do have differences which we consider principled on points you do not mention. My observations on this aspect in my last letter do not now seem sufficiently clear to me. They deserve further elaboration.

You do not mention, nor develop in any of your points, the specifically working-class or state-power tasks. Is it because you think these are obvious? We shall clarify these points because they are not so obvious to us.

In your basic points you do not say a single word about the great conquests won by the Portuguese workers movement or about the embryonic forms of dual power. The Portuguese mass movement has won much more than just democratic rights and a Constituent Assembly. It has won industrial unions and the Intersyndical and very much more than that; the extremely important and widespread embryos of dual power: the workers commissions; factory, business establishment and house occupations, as well as soldiers committees and assemblies with their purging of officers. What is involved is knowing whether the reports and articles by Gerry Foley, all Trotskyist commentators, and the world press are correct regarding the occupation of business enterprises, the existence of workers commissions, and -- what is decisive -- the soldier assemblies and committees, the purging of officers. Do these exist or not? If not, and if they haven't attained the size stated by the reports already mentioned, you have to begin with a discussion as to the facts. Did the Trotskyist soldier exaggerate or lie to Gerry Foley? If so, why did Foley not say so, adding new facts to indicate the falsifications or exaggerations? Until the contrary is proven these are the facts and they allow one and only one interpretation: we have entered a stage in which the mass movement has attained its greatest victory -- the birth of autonomous, independent dual power that cannot be reconciled with the capitalist and imperialist regime. Our world movement paid with 25 years of disasters for not recognizing, when it occurred, that a dual power regime had arisen in Bolivia. The same thing might occur today if we don't realize in time that this is what we have had in Portugal since March 11. Defining

the situation this way does not mean that the dual power is exactly like that in Russia, Bolivia or Spain at the beginning of the Civil War. It is more embryonic and does not have Soviet characteristics, but it exists. Trotsky warned us against fetishism regarding soviet forms and pointed to the manifestation of dual power in other forms. Thanks to him we were the only ones to point out at the time that there was dual power in Bolivia, even though it was expressed through union organizations and their worker militias. These militias, which at one point constituted the only armed forces in the country, provided the key. Today in Portugal if we consider the armed forces and the workers in the factories in their totality, there is no doubt that there is atomized but widespread dual power which expresses itself everywhere, and not as a sporadic and episodic phenomenon.

If Gerry Foley's reports and articles are accurate by even one-third or one-fourth, there is necessarily a series of principled positions which you do not mention in your letter. We have some doubts about why. We have the impression that you don't give the phenomena the importance they deserve, that the only thing about the Portuguese revolution that interests you are the democratic conquests, and you ignore those that are specifically working class and related to revolutionary power. One example comes to mind. Gerry Foley has given us an exact definition of the Republica operation as an MFA-Stalinist "provocation." But he does not make clear or properly analyze the character of the "provocation." IP makes matters worse by publishing an article by Trotsky on freedom of the press which has nothing to do with the current Portuguese situation, but with a semi-colonial country like Mexico with a Bonapartist "sui generis" government. You have compared the Portuguese revolution to the Russian revolution, but when the moment arrives to make a comparison in connection with a concrete political event, you resort to a country that has never gone through the process of a working-class revolution in action as is happening in Portugal and as was the case with Russia in its time. Why didn't you quote what Trotsky said about freedom of the press during the Russian revolution? Why didn't you explain why the Stalinists campaigned for the government to take control of the reactionary press in Mexico and why, on the other hand, they occupied the official socialist daily in Portugal? The reason is very clear: Stalinism has utilized the dual power method now in vogue in Portugal -- occupation of business establishments -- to carry out a reactionary, antidemocratic maneuver. If we don't explain the combination of these two elements of the "provocation" and pick out only one -- the counterrevolutionary, antidemocratic objective of the MFA-CP, nobody will understand anything, or at best will understand very little. The Stalinists could not occupy the newspaper plants in Mexico because the period did not permit it since there were no embryos of dual power. Therefore the MFA-Stalinist provocation is more like the persecution of the Bolshevik opposition press by the Soviet majority. And outlawing the Maoists is "parallel" (to use your words) to what the Mensheviks-Social Revolutionaries-Cadets, headed by Kerensky, did against the Bolsheviks. But in defending themselves against these provocations by the Soviet majority the Bolsheviks were very careful to emphasize that the Soviets were the greatest conquest of the Russian workers movement and they kept up the struggle to win the leadership of them. You will give rise to religious-type confusions if you fight only for "democratic rights" as if you were in a normal bourgeois country. That is, unless you make it clear that today in

Portugal we, the Trotskyists, support unto the death the occupation of all bourgeois enterprises including the newspapers, their control by the workers commissions, the expansion and centralization of these commissions, and the immediate expulsion of the MFA-CP-SP bureaucrats from their posts in the occupied or nationalized enterprises. In the case of Republica we support its right to be published freely because this is a provocation by the MFA-CP government and we explain that this provocation consists of using revolutionary forms and methods common to the entire Portuguese proletariat for counterrevolutionary purposes -- to close down the opposition press. If we don't do it this way it will be hard for us to distinguish our support for the return of Republica from the counterrevolutionary context in which the SP carries on its campaign. That is, they are against all the worker occupations anywhere in the country, against the anarchy provoked by the workers movement, for order and production in the establishments, for the return of the occupied and nationalized enterprises to their owners. This is the only analysis that can provide us with a correct and not an abstract and general policy. In the Republica case the big enemy is the MFA with its troops stationed at the door of the plant. We should have and could have proposed an agreement during the Socialist demonstrations in which we should have participated. That proposal should have been that a temporary agreement be made between the Socialists and the workers commissions in Republica and all other printing plants that we all join together to oppose any attempt at intervention or mediation by the government and its troops. This would have exposed both the parties since Rego, the Republica editor, just like the CP, used all his influence to get the MFA to intervene. That is, we should have been the worker and popular vanguard in the struggle for the return of Republica to the Socialist party. But in our way of carrying on the struggle we would have stood out as those defending the method of factory occupation and the workers commissions, tending to make it clear that the big enemy and the big danger was the MFA government and its agent, the CP, which tried to use the conflict for its counterrevolutionary policy of curtailing democratic rights. The other side of the same campaign would have been to fight all attempts by the Socialist leadership to transform its mobilization in support of democratic rights into a counterrevolutionary petty-bourgeois mobilization against the workers commissions and the occupations.

The tactical openings could have been these or others. I only bring them up to point out the existence of dual power and the changes we are obliged to make in the formulation of our line and our slogans because of the existence of this phenomenon. To this end the following points should be combined with yours in order to have a principled position on Portugal:

First: The rise of serious embryos of dual power since March 11 oblige us to modify the entire structure of our slogans and our line. The most important aspect of our activity should be to defend, expand and centralize these embryos, defeating the counterrevolutionary maneuvers of the MFA-CP-SP to liquidate them or assimilate them into the bourgeois state power.

Second: The Portuguese masses know the names of the forms taken by these embryos. They are the worker and neighborhood commissions, the occupation of business establishments and houses, and the soldiers assemblies and committees. Our major task is to develop and attempt to centralize these revolutionary organs and procedures.



Third: The dual power that already exists has, for the moment, not taken on the form of organizing and developing soviets. The MFA-CP is meeting with relative success in its maneuvers to completely deprive these dual power embryos of the character of revolutionary power. Their maneuver is to accept them in order to assimilate them into the bourgeois state apparatus. The maneuvers consist of the following: place MFA bureaucrats in the nationalized or occupied enterprises; accept workers control only when it is formally subject to the government; accept some discussion in the soldiers assemblies and the existence of soldiers committees while demanding that they recognize military discipline. Finally, it looks like the MFA-CP is leaning toward a maneuver of greater scope -- since it has proven very difficult to control the atomized and spontaneous dual power that exists in every corner of the country -- the fomenting of parodies of soviet-popular organizations much broader than the workers commissions and soldiers committees so they can more easily control the latter and dissolve them into the broader ones.

Fourth: Against these maneuvers our slogan must be: Kick out the MFA and government bureaucrats from the nationalized and occupied enterprises. We should raise a similar slogan in the army: kick out of the assemblies all officers who do not accept the discipline of the assemblies and soldiers committees and who do not publicly break with the discipline of the MFA and the government.

Fifth: If the working class and the soldiers go into the rank-and-file organizations called for and promoted by the MFA-CP, it is our obligation to go along in order to fight the MFA-CP-SP's counterrevolutionary policies. Our policies are not intended as commentaries solely to be read in newspapers, but should be brought directly to the rank and file in these organizations, no matter who promotes them, if that is where the workers and soldiers are to be found.

Sixth: The Portuguese armed forces are in deep crisis. It is our duty to accelerate this crisis until the army structure is reduced to dust. To this end we must expose the MFA as the main support to the imperialist and capitalist character of the armed forces. But this would be of little use if we did not develop the embryos of soldiers' power and bring about unity between the workers and soldiers so they can arm themselves. We have to advance audacious slogans that are understood by everyone in order to develop arming of the workers. One of these is to establish direct links between the workers in the factories and the soldiers. In the factories and barracks we should raise the demand that the soldiers work at least several days a week in all the factories and enterprises near their zone in order to increase their present miserable income. This demand would enable us to establish immediate contacts with the regiments since every workers commission conscious of this need will search for ways to obtain work for the soldiers and give them material aid. It must be shown by deeds that the embryos of workers power can begin to do what the bourgeois state is incapable of doing for the soldiers. On the other hand, the soldiers must be asked to use their arms and their barracks to train the workers in the use of arms or to keep them militarily prepared. This could wind up with the proposal that the arms be kept in the custody of mixed worker and soldier commissions.

Seventh: One of the most important modifications in our tactics because of the new revolutionary situation concerns the reformist



parties and the united front. Now that the task of developing and centralizing the existing elements of dual power is raised to a much higher plane -- offensive and not defensive -- our united-front tactic toward the reformist parties becomes secondary. Our position on the reformist parties becomes essentially one of denouncing their role as agents of the counterrevolutionary MFA. This urgent task should not be an obstacle to taking tactical advantage of the differences between the Socialist party and the MFA-CP in order to reach agreements with the SP and the Maoists in defending democratic rights and demonstrating to the mass movement that the main immediate enemy is the MFA-CP governmental combination. But this tactical utilization and these limited agreements should go hand in hand with a systematic denunciation of the role of the Socialist party itself as the agent of imperialism and the sworn enemy of the embryos of dual power, like the petty-bourgeois ultraleftism of Maoism.

Eighth: Another important change concerns the Constituent Assembly and democratic rights. We must be the defenders of these more than ever, attacking the pact and proposing that the mass movement break with the pact, combining this with the defense of the present Constituent Assembly or proposing that another be called that is absolutely free and sovereign. But this intransigent struggle for democratic rights in general -- not just for the working class -- has to be combined with the proposition that only a revolution by the workers and soldiers commissions can guarantee a free and sovereign Constituent Assembly and complete freedom for all Portuguese. We must link and combine the democratic slogans with those for workers power. We can say the same thing about national self-determination for the Portuguese colonies and the neocolonial maneuvers. Without ceasing for one minute to struggle for the withdrawal of the troops and arms, we must point out that the only final guarantee for these democratic tasks is workers power.

Ninth: We should also change our line with regard to the Intersyndical. For us Trotskyists it is a matter of principle at this moment to be active in the Intersyndical and the industrial unions in spite of their Stalinist leadership and in spite of the bourgeois MFA government's regulations in its favor and its attempt to form a union organization that serves its own ends. It is also a question of principle to fight inside the Intersyndical and the unions against any state regulation over the democratic right to free unionization and against the Stalinist bureaucracy that leads it. But this does not mean to fight against the Stalinist bureaucracy only from within the union, but also to fight against it inside the workers commissions. These have to be prevented from becoming a part of the Stalinist union apparatus and bureaucracy and thus being incorporated into the counter-revolution of the MFA in the government. Independence of the workers commissions from the union apparatus. Clean the Stalinists out of the workers commissions, where they use the pretext of forming a single industrial union organization in order to push forward the MFA government's superexploitation plan for the working class. Let the workers commissions be subordinate only to assemblies of their compañeros in the factory and not to any other self-declared workers organizations, whether parties or central unions. Today in every collision between unions and commissions we Trotskyists have already taken sides: for the commissions against the union.

Tenth: We must put an end to abstractions about the workers and farmers government. The counterrevolutionary utopia, at this moment, of an SP-CP-Intersyndical government should no longer appear in our propaganda. We must point out the only possible perspective that reality poses for us: OUR BASIC SLOGAN FOR THE STAGE THAT OPENED ON MARCH 11 MUST BE: DEVELOPMENT AND CENTRALIZATION OF THE WORKERS COMMISSIONS AND SOLDIERS COMMITTEES SO THEY CAN TAKE POWER IN A GREAT NATIONAL CONGRESS AND GUARANTEE A FREE AND SOVEREIGN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY.

The purpose of this slogan is to "patiently educate," very, but very, patiently. But it is the only true one, the only principled one at this time. Comparison with the Russian Revolution again is called for. It was the main slogan of the Bolsheviks from February to October. For us it became the main demand in March, that is, when the buds of dual power appeared. But it is propagandistic; for the moment we cannot demand, "Down with the MFA government!" But a ferocious campaign must be undertaken against this government in preparation for the latter slogan which we will have to raise in the short term if the revolution continues to go forward.

Eleventh: Only the Trotskyist party can consistently propagandize for these tasks and slogans. There can and should be many united fronts with factions and tendencies in other parties and in the army that have been affected by the situation and that go along with the mass movement. But these united fronts can only be organized and fostered by Trotskyists, the only ones who understand that what we have in Portugal today are buds of dual power; what this means, and what is the only correct line: develop them up to the liquidation of the bourgeois forces and bourgeois power.

I beg you to keep in mind, Joe, that I have gone so deeply into these slogans in order to concretely show you what I am thinking. The important thing is whether we are in agreement on the general analysis and perspectives. As always, I anxiously await your reply. For my part, if possible, I am going to Portugal next week to see the reality with my own eyes. It's possible that I'll change because journalistic reports never totally reflect reality. We shall see.

With my most fraternal regards, as always,

Hugo