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# INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

No. 5

July 1971

CONTENTS	PAGE
<b>AGAIN, AND ALWAYS, THE QUESTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL, by Alain Krivine and Pierre Frank</b>	2
<b>JULY 7, 1971, LETTER FROM THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY TO THE UNITED SECRETARIAT</b>	6

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to the United Secretariat of the  
Fourth International)

10 cents

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**SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY**

## AGAIN, AND ALWAYS, THE QUESTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL

By Alain Krivine and Pierre Frank

The next World Congress of the International will discuss its statutes. This discussion cannot deal only with formal questions, the revising of this or that article relating to this or that body. It cannot fail to include the main question: the nature of the International, more particularly the relations that must exist between the International and the national sections. It is all the more necessary to do this inasmuch as, in the period that has elapsed since the last World Congress, the problem has been raised. This occurred in the "protocol of agreement" signed by the Ligue Communiste (French section of the Fourth International) and the Lutte Ouvrière group. It has likewise been raised in a way affecting the very course of our movement, as we shall show later. Both for the present state of our movement as well as for its future, it is of the greatest importance that there be clarity on this question, which is decisive to the highest degree.

Let us recall the pertinent terms of the "protocol of agreement" referred to above:

"The united organization is to be the French section of the Fourth International. The members of the two fused organizations are to participate in working out policies in the leading bodies of the Fourth International (World Congress, International Executive Committee, United Secretariat), in the international discussion among the organizations belonging to the Fourth International, in the construction of the International.

"On the basis of this agreement, the United Secretariat pledges not to modify the leadership of the French section democratically elected by a congress. It likewise pledges to respect the orientation adopted by a majority at a congress, or by leading bodies of the united organization. Its representative is to make a declaration along these lines at the unification congress. This pledge is to be published as an annex to the statutes."

Some comrades have seen in these lines, if not a departure from our conception of the International as a world party based on democratic centralism, at least a softening of it. To the remarks made along these lines, we replied that the acceptance by the Ligue Communiste of the demand made by Lutte Ouvrière on the point in question did not constitute any modification whatsoever of our concept, the statutes governing the International (which will be discussed at the next World Congress) being in conformity with such a demand: the powers of the United Secretariat and even of the International Executive Committee are strictly delimited and do not authorize any intervention by these bodies in the elected leadership of a national section. Being in conformity with the statutes of the International, the signature of the Ligue Communiste consequently did not breach in any way the conception on which the Fourth International was founded.

But it is true that the intentions of the comrades of Lutte Ouvrière in this matter were evidently opposed to that conception. They have written more than once that since the international leadership has not "proved" itself, they deny that it possesses any authority. It is true that the particular clause in question was included in the statutes because of an error committed by the International Secretariat with regard to the Parti Communiste Internationaliste in 1952. This error (the suspension of a national leader-

ship because of repeated violations of discipline) was all the graver inasmuch as the subject under debate at the time was displaced by it, and inasmuch as the split then had graver consequences than it would have had if that measure had not been taken: because we are convinced that the split would have occurred in any case. It is sufficient to measure the depth of the differences that we have on a whole series of political and organizational questions with the Lambertist group in order to understand that the debate in 1952 already contained the germs of these very profound differences. Thus it would have been an immense gain to have brought these out better. In addition, the international consequences of the split in France would have been quite different from those that it provoked at the time.

It is necessary to add that the error also favored the development of false and erroneous views on the question that is the subject of this article. Because of an error committed by the highest international body, some have had a tendency to question the fundamental principle of the organization as a whole. It should be noted that the mistakes or errors committed by national leaderships (and there is no lack of them), do not lead anyone to dream of questioning democratic centralism on the national scale. That this is done on the international level proves that the revolutionary Marxist concept of the world party is not as solidly anchored as it should be.

One can easily write correct generalities on the question of the International as we conceive it (a world party) and . . . take them but little into account in practice. Because important happenings in daily political life contribute to perturbing the relations that ought to exist between the International and its sections.

First of all, in a general way, most of the members of the sections cannot participate in the daily life of the International as they do in that of their respective section. The daily problems, the problems of language, do not even permit them to follow the life of the most important sections. Our comrades frequently mobilize in carrying out tasks of international solidarity, but it is only from time to time that they come to know the problems of other sections; it is only every two or three years that they participate in the preparation of a world congress (which, moreover, necessarily deals much more with big political problems than with the problems of the International's daily functioning). Material difficulties are likewise troublesome in the life of the International: the international documents are written initially in French or English. Translation problems are very heavy above all for the small sections. The very promising current recruitment poses considerable problems of education and assimilation, which cannot be resolved as rapidly on the international level as on the national. By the very force of circumstances, international work, properly speaking, tends (outside of providing information) to be the prerogative of comrades knowing one or more foreign languages. We need only mention the obstacles set up by all the bourgeoisies to international relations and also the fact that we are steeped in a milieu in which ideology, except for us, is normally fostered in a "national" direction.

Another example which shows how material conditions favor the tendency to place national above international

considerations: The members of our international bodies are elected as individuals (naturally, taking into account national organizations) so that each person in these bodies is, must be, an international leader in the first place, a national leader in the second. However, comrades elected in this way participate mainly as leaders of their section first of all, in an accessory way as a leader of the International. Practically, how many times are we not obliged to accept between two congresses, at sessions of the International Executive Committee, the replacement of a member by another comrade of his section? The statutes, moreover, take this possibility into account, by submitting the replacement to ratification by the international body. Yet, in contrast to the past when going to an international meeting could separate leaders from their section for long periods, air travel makes it feasible today, provided the International has sufficient finances, for all the members of the International Executive Committee to meet more frequently and to make that body more homogeneous and better able to play a genuinely leading role, instead of being a too infrequent gathering of national leaders.

We know how much existence can determine consciousness, even among those who deliberately swim against the current. That is why we must be careful not only to formulate our conception of the International correctly but also to call attention to anything that can pull us in an opposite direction and to ceaselessly search out the means required to make our movement, despite everything, a genuinely world party.

It is hardly necessary to take up the central argument of Lutte Ouvrière, according to which democratic centralism on an international scale is not possible, presumably because the international leadership has not proved itself. Such an argument holds with equal force on the national level where they are careful not to advance it. Those who advance it on the international level do so not because of its intrinsic worth, but in reality as a practical defense of some prerogatives of national leadership. Besides that, the "argument" leads to a vicious circle: if no international leadership can be had until it has proved itself, no "proofs" can be had until an international leadership first exists.

In other words, the "argument" made by Lutte Ouvrière condemns any effort to organize a world party.

The argument made by Lutte Ouvrière is not the most dangerous; there are others that are more subtle or more specious. For example, the one according to which the international leadership can work only on the strategic level and that it should have little or nothing to say on the level of tactics, these being solely the responsibility of the national sections. For example, the argument according to which the International means above all the coordination, the collaboration of national sections undertaking actions in common or in parallel. We will quote in this respect a recent article by Comrade J. Barnes, the last sentence of which we have underlined:

"From the time of Marx and Engels on, the revolutionary party has always been conceived of as an international party, not just a national party. That is because the revolutionary struggles in different parts of the world are inter-related, not simply parallel. This has been richly verified in the last few years, as we have seen the obvious coincidence and mutual interaction of the colonial revolution, the political revolution in the workers states, and the revolution in the advanced capitalist countries. Most obvious of

all has been the crucial role that the colonial revolution has played, not only in affecting the mass movement in the United States, but in reversing the entire international political situation.

*"The principal condition for international organization is international collaboration between leaderships developed out of the experiences of real organizations fighting to build mass revolutionary Trotskyist parties in every country."* (J. Barnes, *International Socialist Review*, April 1971, page 35.)

Let's examine these points of view then to see to what degree they correspond or do not correspond to our conception of the International, a world party based on democratic centralism.

It goes without saying that democratic centralism on an international scale cannot be identical in every respect to democratic centralism on a national scale, if only because of the fact that the national situations differ from each other to an incomparably greater degree than do the regional situations within a country. It would not occur to anyone to make decisions on specific actions from a center located several thousand kilometers away. The international leadership has never abused its role as the center; to the contrary, it can be accused much more of having too often taken a reserved attitude toward the national leaderships. The arguments mentioned above tend rather to maintain if not to encourage such a state of affairs whereas the leadership of the International as well as the leadership of sections ought to act in an opposite way.

The distinction between strategy and tactics would appear to hold, the first flowing above all from an international analysis, the second from specific national conditions. But, like all distinctions, this is often very relative; in more than one instance it is not easy to draw a line separating strategy from tactics. In addition, the initiatives undertaken by a section can have serious consequences for other sections and even for the entire International. It is obvious that no statutes, however well designed, can meet all the situations, all the strategic or tactical problems that life may throw up. We repeat once again, what is involved is our conception of the International, and the danger facing us today does not lie in an abuse, in an excess of the "authority" of the International, but in the opposite situation and in all the arguments going against this authority, which favor transforming the International into a federation of national sections.

As for thinking that the International, aside from the most general theoretical and political elaboration of positions, is essentially the coordination of sections and more particularly the leaderships of sections born out of real experiences, this in reality reduces the International to a common denominator so narrow as to throw the door wide open to federalism. Whether one likes it or not, such a conception in practice repudiates the International because it would give predominance today to certain sections, to certain national organizations and give them a privileged position in the International. Who can guarantee that in certain sections we now have leaderships that have passed all tests? We live, let us not forget, in an extremely chaotic world, in which the stability of no leadership, no organization can be absolutely guaranteed; to permit ourselves to be guided by con-

junctural considerations in defining the base of our international movement is to condemn ourselves to not acquiring the least existence. Moreover this argument amounts to saying that there is no International as long as there are no national leaderships, and that goes against not only everything we have learned from Trotsky, but against everything he did from the time he was expelled from the Soviet Union—the construction of the Trotskyist movement was not done by first of all creating a base, on the national scale, in order to perfect it on the international scale, but simultaneously internationally and nationally, and always with the conception of an international organization based on democratic centralism. We could easily provide several pages of quotations from Trotsky condemning the conception of constructing the International along the lines of building a house by first setting up the walls (the sections) and then the roof. Here is one, picked at random:

"It is necessary to understand first of all that really independent workers' parties—independent not only of the bourgeoisie, but also of both bankrupt Internationals—cannot be built unless there is a close international bond between them, on the basis of self-same principles, and provided there is a living interchange of experience, and vigilant mutual control. The notion that national parties (which ones? on what basis?) must be established first, and coalesced only later into a new International (how will a common principled basis then be guaranteed?) is a caricature echo of the history of the Second International: the First and Third International were both built differently. But, today, under the conditions of the imperialist epoch, after the proletarian vanguard of all countries in the world has passed through many decades of a colossal and common experience, including the experience of the collapse of the two Internationals, it is absolutely unthinkable to building new Marxist, revolutionary parties, without direct contact with the self-same work in other countries. And this means the building of the Fourth International." ("The ILP and the Fourth International," in *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1935-36*, Pathfinder Press, p. 67.)

We likewise mention that this conception of first the walls and then the roof was strongly opposed during the preparatory discussion for the Foundation Congress of the Ligue Communiste, in order to obtain the vote for affiliating with the Fourth International. (See *Cahiers Rouge, Documents de formation communiste No. 8-9*.)

We are as conscious as anyone of the weaknesses of our movement on the level of the international leadership, but these weaknesses likewise exist on a national level, and we dispute any claim of a national leadership or organization at possessing greater political or organizational solidity than that of the International. The question, moreover, is not one of appreciation or the comparative capacities of forces, but of the function, of the existence of the International. Either you recognize its necessity and you act like an International, whatever its dimensions may be, or, while recognizing its necessity, you declare that it cannot exist unless certain conditions are fulfilled and in that case you postpone the existence of the International in practice . . . to the Greek calends. For you create an association, a federation of national parties that can have amicable, cordial relations with each other, but only as long as a community of views exists among them on one or

several given questions. The existing relations then are bilateral or multilateral relations like those existing at present among the Communist parties, which in substance are similar to diplomatic relations such as exist in the UN. On the basis of such a situation you can never develop an International as we conceive it.

Up to this point we have taken up arguments that to us appeared to be dangerous. Unfortunately we have to add that since the last World Congress things have likewise gone in practice in a direction opposite to that of reinforcing the International, most particularly with regard to Latin America. On this question, there was a majority and a minority at the World Congress; it was decided that while acting in accordance with the orientation voted for, the discussion would be reopened at a date to be decided on by a plenum of the IEC; this was done at the end of 1970. The comrades of the SWP of the United States supported the minority point of view. We must regret that they did not limit themselves to defending their point of view in the discussion—which was obviously their completely unquestionable right—but also through multiple interventions in the field encouraged those who shared their point of view to pay no attention to the vote of the World Congress and to go against those who were applying the orientation adopted by the majority. Matters reached greatest sharpness in Argentina. No one had ever thought of asking the members of the "sympathizing group" to apply the line voted for, because they would not have been able to do so. They should at least have had a genuine "sympathizing" attitude toward those who were carrying it out and who were risking their lives each day. In Argentina and several other countries in Latin America, the support of the SWP went, both in the press published under their control and in the interventions of members of their leadership, to groups or to comrades who openly fought the orientation decided on at the World Congress. We will not dwell more on this subject since it is a notoriously known fact and no one can deny it.

Obviously we cannot accept the "argument" according to which the "sympathizing group" of La Verdad had a correct policy, a Leninist concept of party construction, while the Argentine section of the Fourth International is presumably an ultraleft formation. First of all because we do not share this point of view (but this is another subject for discussion.) Next, because it is not possible for a national organization no matter who it is to take upon itself to decide on the international level who is and who is not Trotskyist. Finally because, in the case in question, it was undeniable that *in intervening against the Argentine section, the intervention in fact was against the decision taken by the World Congress*. It will be possible at the next World Congress to confirm or to reverse the decision of the preceding Congress, but whoever does so at present on his own authority simply repudiates democratic centralism on an international level, and places in question—more than the "rights" of this or that elected international body—the vote of the World Congress and by that the obligations that this vote imposes; in other words it is the very existence of the International that is put in question.

We will add that when a leadership permits itself to bypass democratic centralism on the international level, to violates the rules and the relations that must exist in the International, *ipso facto* it encourages everyone (national leaderships, national sections, individuals) to do the same.

If for any reason whatever, someone replaces the principled relations that must exist in accordance with our conception of the world party, by the question of the relationship of forces, everyone will be incited to improve the relationship of forces in favor of his own positions, thus encouraging tendencies leading to the disintegration of the International.

It is necessary finally to be fully aware of the fact that there is no third position between a world party and a federation of national parties. This does not depend on the size of the forces of this one or that one, etc. If a federative or semifederative position is taken, disengagement from it can be achieved only at cost of a grave crisis. If, on the contrary, the conception of the International as a world party is accepted, it is necessary to demonstrate it by organizing and acting in accordance with this conception without deferring it—in this case, the power of example will be attractive as well as educational for those who, outside our ranks, are attracted by our ideas in general but do not understand the importance of the existence of the International. Under present conditions, this is a question involving not a few individuals but groups in various countries.

It is not sufficient to condemn the absence of internationalism among the Social Democratic parties or the looser and looser links among the Communist parties. It is necessary to understand that if we do not redress the situation that has begun to develop among us, we run grave dangers.

We want to hope that the next World Congress will bring to an end some practices that are contrary to our conception of the International. But we know that a Congress decision is not sufficient to do so. In raising the question we want to help alert all the members of the Trotskyist movement, above all the youngest members who have not yet had much chance to become familiar with it, to make them understand the importance of the question. We thus hope to bring about a retreat from erroneous positions and practices, and help to advance correct conceptions and practices.

With relation to a more effective internationalist practice the question of the International center is posed, both of the IEC and of the US. Because the role of the center in this question is quite decisive. For reasons that are both objective (unequal development of the revolution in the world) as well as subjective, the sections necessarily undergo uneven development which can have troublesome consequences at certain times. For example, although the development of the political revolution in the workers states is proceeding at present stronger than ever, the formation of even small groups in these countries is not conceivable at present without considerable political and material support from the International as a whole. On the other hand, this unequal development can become a combined development in the sense that a serious advance or even a breakthrough of our movement in a given country would have important repercussions in several other countries if not in the International as a

whole. To a certain degree this was seen in Europe with Thus it is indispensable for the international center to receive from the sections more cadres and more material means (financial, etc.), for only it, on the basis of planning objectives determined by an analysis of the objective and subjective situation, can undertake the necessary initiatives so that the development of the Fourth International does not remain essentially that of national sections rather independent from each other, but becomes a development in which the forces, unequally divided at the beginning, are combined to bring a maximum return on the international scale. The question of the international center is thus something essential; it must be more representative than ever of the present development of the sections, but must also be something more, a genuine international leadership rich in men and means.

It is only with this conception of the International that we will prove capable of utilizing all our resources to construct new sections and reinforce the others. It is in accordance with this conception that the strongest organizations like the SWP or the Ligue Communiste must understand the necessity of making financial sacrifices in their interest, for the International. Concretely this signifies making choices, cutting certain expenses, in order to make it possible to provide financial aid to regions where this is indispensable (Latin America, India, etc.). It is only in this way that we can avoid unsound debates linked to a lack of internationalist education, to the desire to apply to others the national conditions of one's own field of action. The construction of the International in the extremely favorable conditions that we find today thus entails more education, more information, more centralization, and more resources with a center capable of functioning and genuinely representative of the present development of our sections. The absence of a strong center injures not only centralism in the International, but also and perhaps even more democracy within it, because without a strong center, the sections cannot be informed on the life, activities, the points of view of the national organizations, indispensable for assuring democracy. Now, while the national Trotskyist organizations have multiplied numerically often by four, six even ten times since the last World Congress, while new organizations have been formed, the international center has not even doubled in men and in means. The next World Congress must seriously envisage measures to remedy this situation.

Also, so that this will not remain only in the domain of ideas, so that it can begin to be put into application, we will ask the World Congress to take measures aimed at *immediately reinforcing the international center in personnel and in means*. For a long time it was extremely difficult if not impossible for our movement to have a center corresponding to our actual needs. Difficulties still exist, but it is possible and thus urgent to overcome those that depend only on us. To do that requires bringing our acts into consonance with our principles.

June 10, 1971

JULY 7, 1971, LETTER FROM THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE OF  
THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY TO THE  
UNITED SECRETARIAT

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N. Y. 10014

July 8, 1971

Dear Ernest,

Enclosed is a letter to the United Secretariat that the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party voted to send at its July 7, 1971, meeting. The letter is self-explanatory.

Comradely,  
s/ Jack Barnes  
Organization Secretary

cc: Members United Secretariat

New York, N. Y.  
July 7, 1971

To the United Secretariat  
of the Fourth International

Dear Comrades,

We have studied attentively your statement concerning our letter of May 11, 1971, in which we voiced our concern over the "Domingo" letter. We have also weighed the arguments advanced by Comrade Maitan in his "Introductory Note to the Letter Signed Domingo," his note correcting the English translation of the "Domingo" letter, and his "Reply to the Political Committee of the SWP." The apprehensions we expressed over the "Domingo" letter have not been allayed. They have, instead, been increased.

In our letter of May 11, we suggested that the majority of the United Secretariat issue a statement on the "Domingo" letter along the following lines: ". . . (a) making it absolutely clear that the impression created by the content of the letter that the author was speaking in behalf of the Latin American Commission and the United Secretariat has no correspondence with the truth; (b) specifically dissociating the United Secretariat in its majority from the views expressed in the letter, particularly the factional attack on the *La Verdad* group and Comrade Moreno; (c) informing the movement what the 'Comite uruguayo (IV Internacional)' actually represents, and — if this still remains unknown to the members of the United Secretariat — indicating that an investigation will be undertaken to ascertain the facts."

We suggested further that the "Domingo" letter be published in the Internal Bulletin, together with the clarifying statement by the majority of the United Secretariat and our letter of May 11.

We were pleased that you agreed to publish the "Domingo" letter in the Internal Bulletin together with our letter of May 11. On the other points, however, we feel that your response failed to measure up to the requirements of the situation, and represented a default in leadership responsibility.

For example, you did not inform the movement what the "Comité uruguayo (IV Internacional)" represents. From

Comrade Maitan's "Reply to the Political Committee of the SWP," we gather that he, too, does not know what it represents. He refers merely to a group which "if my memory is correct" utilized the name at times.

Thus you ignored our suggestion that if you did not know the identity of the "Comite uruguayo (IV Internacional)" an investigation was in order. The ranks of the world Trotskyist movement are still in the dark as to who it was that received, translated, mimeographed, and distributed the letter signed "Domingo." Was it done by a section? A sympathizing organization? Or an isolated individual who happens to be on Comrade Maitan's private mailing list? Do not the cadres of the Fourth International have a right to such information?

We suggested that you specifically dissociate the United Secretariat from the views expressed in the "Domingo" letter, particularly the factional attack on the *La Verdad* and Comrade Moreno. You did not do this. Consequently we have no choice but to conclude that you share Comrade Maitan's views in this respect.

Finally, we suggested that you make it absolutely clear that Comrade Maitan was not speaking in behalf of either the Latin American Commission or the United Secretariat.

You did this; but in such a way as to deepen our concern. You stated that the "letter signed Domingo is a private letter sent by a member of the US in his own name, and not in the name of a body of the International." You then justified this as being perfectly legitimate: "The US holds that the content of the letter signed Domingo does not go beyond the normal limits of a personal letter devoted to differences under wide discussion within our movement."

We maintain that the content of the letter, with its sub-headings and footnotes, shows on the face of it that it is not a personal letter but a factional document aimed at lining up comrades in a secret way.

The fact that the majority of the United Secretariat could consider that the writing of such a document by one of its members is a perfectly normal private matter raises a number of questions in our minds as to the concepts and procedures regulating the functioning of the body entrusted with leadership of the Fourth International between meetings of the International Executive Committee.

1. It signified that any member of the United Secretariat is free to act on his own as a private individual in handling situations of a grave nature that require mutual discussion, evaluation, and decision. Such a practice reduces the United Secretariat to a federation of heads of commissions, who consider it normal not even to inform each other at times of important decisions they have made and processes they have set in motion.

2. It opens the way to abuses of a most serious nature, such as operating behind the back of the United Secretariat and behind the back of the leaderships of sections.

3. It fosters the formation of personal cliques and similar unhealthy groupings put together in secret by this or that individual member of the United Secretariat.

4. If it is considered normal for Comrade Maitan to operate in such a fashion it must be considered likewise normal for other members of the United Secretariat to operate in a similar way. The question follows automat-

ically: Who else in the United Secretariat is sending out comparable factional letters to his own private mailing list? The position taken by the majority of the United Secretariat on the question of personal privilege in such matters places the entire committee under a cloud. A serious blow has thus been dealt to its authority and to its claim to be serving as a collective leadership.

Comrade Maitan's attempted defense of his letter does nothing toward counteracting these conclusions.

First of all, we will take up some small matters. In the "P. S." to his "Reply to the Political Committee of the SWP," Comrade Maitan suggests that a security question was involved in revealing that he used the pen name of "Domingo." If the rules of security were violated, the first infraction occurred when the author appended the name "Domingo" to a document that does not contain a single item involving any real security matter.

Of course, if he has organized a secret private faction, then a security problem would be involved—for the faction. To avoid that security problem a simple procedure was open: submission of his document in his own name for publication in the Internal Bulletin.

We should like to point out that so far as the Fourth International as a whole is concerned, we were the ones to call the attention of the United Secretariat to the existence of this document and its circulation in Latin America, something the author had not seen fit to do. Was this a violation of security rules on our part? We acted in a responsible way by bringing the document to the attention of the United Secretariat. Unfortunately the majority of the United Secretariat did not seem to welcome what we did.

Comrade Maitan protests our sending the *La Verdad* group a copy of our letter to the United Secretariat. The *La Verdad* group is both a sympathizing organization and directly involved as one of the subjects of the "Domingo" letter. What about the "Comité uruguayo (IV Internacional)"? By what statutory right is it to be placed in the favored category of being on Comrade Maitan's private mailing list while the *La Verdad* organization—not to mention the United Secretariat—is excluded?

On the alleged mistranslation of "we" and "I," Comrade Maitan refers to his habit of using the Italian "noi" or French "nous" which, he says, "the translators of the IP normally and correctly translate as 'I.'" The translators of IP inform us that they only stumbled upon this quirk after some years of mistranslating Comrade Maitan's "noi" or "nous" as "we." However, what does this have to do with the "Domingo" letter? That document was circulated in Latin America as a Spanish translation in which the "noi" or "nous" was translated as "nosotros" and not "yo." To grasp the impact and import of the document as it was circulated among our Latin American cothinkers, it is necessary to know that the pronoun "nosotros" was used throughout. The correct translation of "nosotros" is "we."

If a translating error was made, it was committed by those who translated the "Domingo" letter into Spanish. Obviously they were under the impression that Comrade Maitan was speaking in some official capacity for the International and not as a private individual. This impression was strengthened by such authoritative-sounding declarations as the following: "Since that time the *La Verdad* group, disregarding the responsible attitude the congress took . . . has indulged in unacceptable factional maneuvers, provoking a deterioration in its relations with

the International."

A more important issue than the translation of "noi," "nous," or "nosotros" is the innuendo made by Comrade Maitan that Comrade Pedro took a special secret trip to Argentina on the invitation of the *La Verdad* group to attend an underground congress they had organized. The United Secretariat knew in *advance* that Comrade Pedro was making this trip to Latin America. It was undertaken in relation to defense work in behalf of the political prisoners in Peru and was timed in accordance with that task. So far as we know, Comrade Maitan was in favor of this work as was the rest of the United Secretariat. Certainly he registered no objections that came to our attention.

These points amount to little more than quibbling. A truly serious item is Comrade Maitan's view of the reunification in 1963, to which we called attention in our letter of May 11. In the "Domingo" letter, Comrade Maitan stated: "The question arises why we have not discussed the problems of the Argentinian section in the past. By hindsight we can conclude that we should have stimulated a discussion and complete clarification long before now. We note, however, that it was difficult for us to intervene in the period immediately following the entry of the Argentinian organization into the International in the aftermath of the reunification and that we relied on a process of progressive assimilation."

It is to be observed that in correcting the "mistranslation," Comrade Maitan specified that the "we" in this passage is correct. Consequently it is absolutely clear that he is expressing what he considers to have been, and to still be, the joint views of the comrades formerly with the International Secretariat.

We observe in particular Comrade Maitan's use of the phrases "entry of the Argentinian organization into the International" and "we relied on a process of progressive assimilation."

In his "Reply to the Political Committee of the SWP," Comrade Maitan uses similar phrases: ". . . we maintained that, in principle, even Healy and Lambert could *enter the International*. . ." (Emphasis added.) He repeats the formula again in relation to Argentina: "We were, with all the more reason, for the *entry* of the Argentine organization. . ." (Emphasis added.)

We conclude from this that Comrade Maitan and the other comrades whom he includes in his "we," took the view in 1963—and have held it ever since—that the reunification consisted of the "entry" of the International Committee into the Fourth International, to be subjected to "a process of progressive assimilation" thereafter.

This was not the viewpoint of the majority of the International Committee, which agreed to engage in the reunification. The viewpoint of the majority of the International Committee was that in 1953-54 a split had occurred *within* the Fourth International involving two factions, both of which belonged to the Fourth International. The main political differences that had led to this split were superseded as early as 1957, in the opinion of the majority of the International Committee, and this opened the possibility for a principled reunification of the two sides, which—if handled correctly—could lead to the eventual liquidation of the former lines of cleavage, a complete fusion of forces, and the construction of a genuinely collective leadership.

It was in accordance with this concept that the majority of the International Committee conducted itself following

the reunification that took place in 1963 on the basis of a statement of the principles of Trotskyism. The majority of the International Committee proceeded quite consciously to attempt to erase the previous lines of division, which had been superseded, and to genuinely dissolve the factions, beginning with its own forces. It consciously rejected any concept of "a process of progressive assimilation" of the other side.

Comrade Maitan's formulations indicate that he had a different concept of the reunification, and followed — and is still following — a different policy from that adopted by the majority of the International Committee. This is what we referred to in our letter of May 11 when we stated that these formulations — coupled with his excursion back in history to 1951 (in the case of the Argentinian section) — indicated that he "held reservations about the reunification in 1963 and that he [in agreement with those he refers to by 'we'] has acted since then in accordance with those reservations." Perhaps it would have been more accurate to say that he acted in accordance with a policy of trying to progressively assimilate the forces of the majority of the International Committee rather than reunify and fuse with them on the basis of the common statement of principles that both sides had adopted.

The policy of "progressive assimilation" has met with a certain success, it seems. Comrade Maitan observes in his "Reply to the Political Committee of the SWP" that the "most severe proposals" against *La Verdad* emanate from comrades who formerly belonged to the International Committee. He adds that "the split of 1968 occurred among Argentine comrades who had all belonged to the International Committee before 1963."

We note something else in Comrade Maitan's "Reply to the Political Committee of the SWP" that is disquieting to us. He uses the terms "majority" and "minority" throughout in a way that shows he is not referring to the voting at the last world congress on the resolutions dealing with Latin America, the "cultural revolution" in China, and the radicalization of the youth. He uses the terms "majority" and "minority" instead as referring to crystallized international factional formations. Thus he says, "If the comrades of the minority want a political discussion on all the problems of our movement in Argentina as of right now, I am ready to accept it for my part." Again, "The comrades of the PC . . . affirm that a member of the minority found himself in Argentina by chance. . . ." In another place: "A comrade representing the minority can certainly make trips . . . it would be very positive if the comrades of both the majority and minority participated in the congresses of the sections. . . ." Still another:

". . . discussion on trips . . . assures the minority the possibility of expressing its points of view and of asking for all the information it wishes."

Up to this point in the international discussion we have followed a policy of *opposing* the crystallization of international tendencies.

First of all, we were of the view that while some important differences had arisen and been expressed at the last world congress, no general division into two opposing sides had occurred there, whatever may have been the factional posturing of some comrades on certain questions. In addition, we assumed that the areas of common agreement outweighed the divisions in view of the virtually unanimous approval of the general political resolution which outlined the main tasks of the Fourth International for the immediate period ahead.

Upon the renewal of discussion in preparation for the coming congress, it appeared to us that a policy of opposing the crystallization of international tendencies would help ensure maximum freedom of debate. It was a policy, we thought, that would be most conducive to bringing out nuances of thought, would best permit the shifts and changes in views called for by the interchange of opinion, the weighing of arguments, and development of more thoroughly grounded judgments. Moreover, such a policy, we felt, would best foster efforts to broaden the areas of common agreement and bring them to the fore.

Judging from the circumstances surrounding the production of the "Domingo" letter, some of the statements made by Comrade Maitan in defense of it, and the assertion by the majority of the United Secretariat that it is perfectly "normal" to write such letters, it would appear that Comrade Maitan and those who agree with him have been proceeding in accordance with a different policy.

In view of this, it is now our opinion that the leaderships of sections and sympathizing organizations who feel concern about these developments would do well to begin consulting directly with each other, particularly in considering what relationship these developments may have to the political differences that have arisen, and what is the wisest course to pursue. This should include the leaderships of declared tendencies in national sections, where they may exist, inasmuch as this is a period of discussion preparatory to a world congress.

We ask that this letter be published in the Internal Bulletin as a statement of our opinion.

With comradely greetings,  
Political Committee  
Socialist Workers Party