

TO : Files

DATE: 15 November 1956

FROM :

SUBJECT: The Fourth International

GENERAL DEFINITION

The Fourth International movement represents those dissident groups within the followers of Marxist political and economic theory who are not subject to the discipline of the Communist Party, USSR and sympathetic or allied Communist Parties in other nations. They form the "splinter" or Trotskyite groups, similar to the Communists in their denunciation of Capitalism, but marked in their opposition to the present Russian government.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prior to the actual establishment of the Fourth International, the basis for its existence was created by the rift among the leaders in the Russian Revolution of 1917. Pre-revolution maneuvering among the Russian Marxists had produced the right wing Mensheviks and the left wing Bolsheviks, the latter headed by Lenin. Trotsky, in 1910, had placed himself in a position between these extremes. In 1917 he aligned himself with the Bolsheviks, although in official Russian history he is known as a Menshevik "counter-revolutionary."

In the period from 1917 to 1924, while Lenin was in power, Trotsky was in frequent disagreement with official policies and had expressed himself as being in ideological opposition to the Russian approach to the development of international Marxism. Upon Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin assumed control. Trotsky remained in opposition and made a continuing struggle against what Stalin claimed to be the extension of Lenin's program. In November, 1927, Stalin triumphed with the expulsion of Trotsky from the Russian government. In 1929 he was exiled from the country.

The basic difference between Stalin and Trotsky concerned the approach of the two men to the spread of Marxism. Trotsky believed the energy of the USSR should be directed to an early world federation of socialist republics. Stalin took the view that universal revolution was impractical at that time, and the resources of Russia should be strenuously directed to the domestic Marxism. The Trotsky view still represents the objective of the present day splinter groups to the government of Russia.

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

FOUNDATION

Upon Trotsky's expulsion from the Russian Communist Party his sympathizers within the various national Communist Parties at first gave no indication of an open break. However, as early as 1927 there was clandestine contact among the Trotsky disciples, and there began to appear factions within the national parties and the Comintern. This occasioned expulsion from the Communist Party proper, a fact which was resisted by the dissenters, who considered themselves as leftist opposition groups of the parent body. For example, the Americans called themselves "Workers Communist League of America, Left Opposition of the Communist Party."

The Moscow trials of 1936 and 1937 ruled out any chance of reconciliation between the Communists and the then disorganized Trotskyites. Trotsky, branded as a traitor, fled to Mexico in January, 1937, where he maintained contact with the various groups in agreement with him. In September, 1938, the Fourth International was proclaimed at a European Congress.

ORGANIZATION

The Fourth International exists as the only example for a federation of national Marxist states, as called for by Marx and Engels. The Third International, or Comintern, from which the Fourth borrowed much of its formal pattern of organization, was disbanded by Soviet Russia in May, 1943. Similarity between the organization of the rival groups can be seen in a review of the Communist international structure, as presented by J. Peters in THE COMMUNIST PARTY, A MANUAL OF ORGANIZATION.

The following bodies comprise the Fourth International:

- World Congress
- World Conference
- International Executive Committee
- International Secretariat
- Continental Conferences
- Continental Executive Committees
- National Groups

The World Congress consists of at least one delegate from each national group, the members of the International Executive Committee, and other members at large who wish to attend. Presiding officers for the affair are elected at the congress and serve only during its duration. Its functions are to draft the International's statutes, draft the political program and the means to effect it, elect members of the International Committee, and arrive at decisions in internal problems.

Congresses have been held in 1937, 1940, 1944, 1946, 1947, and 1948, all in Europe, with the exception of the 1940 emergency conference, held in Mexico.

Number of delegates to the congress is determined by a system of grouping of individual countries, depending on importance. In the first category is allowed three delegates. The second category, allowed two delegates, includes Spain, Italy, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, and Indo-China. The third category, allowed one delegate, includes, Norway, Australia, and the Union of South Africa.

The World Conference is similar to the World Congress in organization, except that only the representatives of the National Groups of the continent in which the conference is held is mandatory. Members of the International Executive Committee and the International Secretariat must be present. The purpose of the conference is to administer and implement the program adopted by the World Congress.

The International Executive Committee administers the affairs of the Fourth International between international meetings, and is accountable to the World Congress or the World Conference. Number of members varies with the strength of the entire movement. The highest position of the committee is the Secretary-General, formerly held by Trotsky himself. Headquarters of the group is believed to be in Paris. They meet about once every six months to discuss problems and actions, within the instructions of the international bodies.

The International Secretariat, with headquarters in Paris and a sub-headquarters in London, handles the day-to-day business of the International with a group of full-time salaried employees. Here details of administration, finance, press policy, and education are organized.

The Continental Conference consists of representatives of the National Groups of the particular continent concerned, the members of the Continental Executive Committee, and one member of the International Executive Committee. The group convenes to organize implementation of the decisions of the World Congress and to consider domestic problems.

The Continental Executive Committee is said to exist only where the International Executive Committee is unable to exert full control over a particular continent or is not equipped to meet the needs of the area. It is possible that the International Executive Committee concentrates on Asia and the Americas and leaves a local group, such as the European Executive Committee to handle its own affairs, with guidance.

The affiliates of the Fourth International within the individual countries comprise the National Groups. In some cases more than one National Group exists in one country. The US is an example. In other instances, parties in several countries have a common headquarters which has control over the groups in those countries.

Heading the National Groups is a unit known variously as the National,

Central, or Political Committee, elected at National Congresses or Conferences.

The National Group may consist of a Majority and a Minority, the latter representing expressed disapproval of the policy set up by the International Executive Committee. Their minority status is determined not by numbers, but by their opposition to official policy. Statutes of the Fourth International require that the Minority have at least one representative in National Headquarters.

INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE

As of 1947, the Fourth International, by its own statement, had affiliates in more than thirty countries in Europe, Asia, and America. In 1949, there was evidence or claims of activity in 46 countries. Following is a list of countries where a revolutionary party has been identified as an affiliate of the Fourth International: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, British Guinea, Canada, Ceylon, Chile, China, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, France, French Pakistan, Palestine (prior to creation of Israel), Peru, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Union of South Africa, USA, Uruguay.

Countries where affiliates are known to exist but where only incomplete information regarding their organization is available include: Algeria, Bulgaria, Japan, and New Zealand.

Countries where the Fourth International claims affiliates but where no information is available include: Austria, Colombia, Cuba, Eire, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Poland, and the USSR.

POLICY

The single, most significant element of the policy of the Fourth International is its complete and unswerving devotion to eventual revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Its intentions are fully as ominous, in potential, as those of the Communist Party proper. Danger to the capitalist society is minimized from this particular quarter because of the relative impotence of the group in its competition with its Marxist rival, existing as it does without the support of the Soviet Union. The limited size of the affiliated national parties also tends to discount the political influence of the movement. However, their numerical insignificance does not prevent the Trotskyites from operating as a disrupting influence, both to capitalist and orthodox Communist, far out of proportion to their head count.

The argument with the Russian Communists, as already stated, concerned the Russian Policy of secondary concern for the worldwide revolution. The Trotskyite sees the Russian leaders as bureaucratic dictators who resist constructive dissent. He believes the Russian people are victims of a dictatorship over the proletariat, a schism against the Marxist tradition of a dictatorship of the proletariat.

Despite the Trotskyite bitterness against the Russian government it is a consistent element of their policy to defend the Soviet state. Although Russia exists as something less than their idea of a Marxist society, it still represents a gain in the class struggle and must be defended against the greed and ambition of reactionary capitalistic neighbor states.

A paradox in the group's policy exists in the toleration of Minority factions. As the alleged true followers of Marx they believe in the relation of theory and action. First develop a theory, then follow no deviation in the action to achieve it. Despite this purist approach, the Fourth International does allow dissent, perhaps because of Trotsky's role as the factionalist in his days within the Soviet hierarchy.

Briefly, the Trotskyite considers himself as the only follower of true Marxist doctrine, the potential savior of the misled Russian people, and the continuing exponent of the worldwide worker's revolution.

HISTORY WITHIN THE UNITED STATES

Trotsky had his sympathizers among American Communists prior to the actual formation of a Trotskyite Party. James G. Cannon in October, 1928, publicly announced his support of Trotsky, and, along with his followers was expelled from the CPUSA. In January, 1929, he organized the first open Trotskyite meeting in the US, held in Boston. In February, 1929, the First National Congress of American Trotskyites was held in Chicago. This affair organized the party previously referred to as the Communist League of America--Left Opposition of the Communist Party.

In 1934, the Trotskyites gave up calling themselves an opposition faction of the Comintern and supported the call for a new International. In that year, Trotsky's American followers merged with the American Workers Party, lead by A. J. Lyster. The new group was known as the Workers Party. In 1936, the Workers Party entered the Socialist Party, on condition that it drop its separate organization and suspend publication of its press. These conditions were ignored, and in 1937, the Socialist Party expelled the newcomers, only after the organization of the parent group had been sabotaged. The Trotskyites reorganized as the Socialist Workers Party, a group which exists today and which actually ran candidates for the Presidency and Vice-Presidency in the 1956 elections.

Passage of the Voorhis Act, which forbids parties with foreign allegiance, has prevented the WWP from openly identifying itself as an affiliate of the Fourth International. However, the concern of the International Secretariat over the internal affairs of American Trotskyites indicates a mutual interest in each others business.

In 1940 Max Schachtman broke with the WWP over what he considered undeserved support of the USSR. He organized a group known as the Workers Party, aka the New International and, as of 1949, the Independent Socialist League. Despite efforts of the international leadership to effect a merger of these groups they remain independent and unreconciled.

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The SWP publishes The Militant, a newspaper, and the Fourth International, a magazine. The ISL publishes Labor Action, a weekly, and The New International, a monthly.

In 1949 it was estimated that the strength of the SWP was 800 members. That of the ISL was believed to be a proximately 400.

FEDERATION

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