

January 20/26, 1963

My dear Marty,

Will you do the following for me, please, immediately?

- a) Get this letter typed and mimeographed (here I suggest only) a hundred copies.
- b) Circulate it to members and friends far and near. Here, of course, you exercise along with the other comrades, your discretion.
- c) As soon as the letter is circulated and there has been some time, call a meeting and discuss it. It will state what is to be discussed, at least there will be no problem for serious people to arrive at decisions in regard to the various points raised in this letter. The letter is not going to leave it vague as to what is to be done.
- d) As soon as the meeting is over please send me, and be ready to circulate along the same lines as above, the minutes of the meeting.
- e) You will send me copies of the letter and copies of the minutes. I have suggested about a dozen copies.

The letter is, I consider, profoundly important, because I am pretty certain that you all are vague upon matters upon which you should have no doubt whatever. I shall divide it into three parts: A) which deals with the public; B) which deals with the organization; C) which deals with me—you know me, I wouldn't tell you my name, although this question of my name will have to come into what we decide.

## A. The Public

In my last letter I dealt with the public. I said that we have reached a stage in modern society where, on the fundamental problems, the whole of the general public is involved. There are not advanced people in regard to atomic war and backward people who have to be educated into the realities of atomic war and what it means. That division in advanced and backward elements of population is now destroyed. We in our organization have laid it down years ago that today there is no difference between theory and practice, that the public is ready for an understanding, probably understands the realities of the political problems that are placed before it. I think we said that unless that is so, to talk about the necessity for socialism on a world scale is a lot of nonsense. We said that years ago. It is more than ever true today.

Here is a quotation from a woman high in public life in Great Britain, a woman who occupies a key position in one of the most decisive phenomena

of our day, the phenomenon of mass communications. Modern mass communications have altered the mentality of society to a degree that has not been equalled since the invention of printing. This is what she says:

I have a great belief in the intelligence of the audience. When a producer fails with a programme and says it was because it was over the heads of the audience, I tell him it is he who has failed.

There is a confusion that the informed are mature and the uninformed are immature. Often it is quite the opposite. I like to think our audiences are mature people who want to be informed.

This woman is the person responsible for a new set of programs on the BBC television. The program to which I refer is a Saturday night program which is being seen obviously by millions of people. It is a program which is satirical about people and about things in Britain including and most violently including, traditional things. I can only give you a few examples of the subjects on which the performers have poured their unadulterated scorn and satire. One of them is the various religions into which Christianity (and the other religions) are divided. I would not have dared either to write or to publish such a thing in a revolutionary paper. Another point that they have taken up, and made the most improper remarks, is illegitimacy. Needless to say politicians, businessmen and all public figures, and I am informed even royalty, are treated in the same way. This, please remember, in a country that is so deeply soaked in tradition as Britain, and this in a public means of communication such as the BBC, which is run by a corporation under government control and paid for by the government. This is not some isolated station in Kansas or California with an exceptional talker or little company. This, as far as Britain is concerned, is official and universal. I mean to say that it is a national program; all the stations in the country get it, and there is no choice. The woman whom I quoted obviously had a certain conception and that conception, if not shared, at least is not opposed by the people who are in general responsible for a procedure of this kind.

I want to say, and I say it without a tremor, that I have had these opinions for a long time. There is, however, one point she makes on which I would like to make a clarification. Read the quotation again. What I would like to add is that the people who are informed are supposed to be mature because they have the information which bourgeois society uses as a means of educating certain sections of it. The virtues of the so-called uninformed are that they are not educated in the education, and particularly the advanced education of bourgeois society, but are educated by their daily life in an advanced society, their contact with the fundamental realities and the human

relations imposed upon all who live and who are subjected to and experience the educative realities of an advanced society. In later discussions I hope to bring before you that this relation, I am now satisfied, exists in every part of the world to one degree or another.

In the previous letter I went into what we must expect in the way of instinctive and organized resistance to the abominable crimes of which bourgeois society today is guilty. I made it clear that we have to have a certain attitude to the public in general, based upon our general understanding of what the public is, in 1963, not what it was in 1933, or still worse, in 1917. I hope in time we shall be able to make clear and concrete the objective and subjective qualifications of what we know today as the general public and our particular concern, the great mass of people.

I hope that is absolutely clear and accepted. That means that we have to have a basis upon which we are all agreed and which is the basis of our view of society and *therefore* of the work we have to do.

Let me end this section by stating this. Unless we have that in our bones, devote ourselves as time goes on to making that as clear and as concrete, and as effective as possible in our own minds, and in the minds of those who listen to us or read what we have to say, we are just wasting time and, I have to say it plainly, we would be better employed elsewhere. That is where we begin, we must never forget it, and it must be so much a part of our minds that it appears and governs everything we do, everything we say, and is an indelible part of the impression we make on people.

## B. The Organization

We come now to the organization.

We have repudiated the conception of the vanguard party. That conception ruined the socialist movement, and the movement of the proletariat, for a generation. I believe only two sets of people in the U.S. believe in it. The first is the State Department. The second is the Trotskyists.

Nobody else believes it, at least in the U.S. The conception, the belief that you are setting out to form a vanguard party, a party which will lead the socialist revolution in the U.S., is the utmost nonsense. It has no relation whatever to the existing social situation, to the world in which we live. In a previous letter (to understand this letter you will have to read and study the previous letters), I dealt with the mentality which a generation, on a continental or on a world scale, arrives at, and maintains, after a tremendous event like the Russian Revolution of 1917. But not only the masses of people absorbed this conception and maintained it, were bound to maintain it until

they received another violent shock, either on a national or most probably on a world scale, for that is the way populations think and move. The intellectuals and political leaders not only encouraged the people to think along these lines, despite all the evidence to the contrary. They ruined themselves, these informed ones, they ruined themselves by their sticking to these ideas, flattering themselves that by sticking to them they were carrying out some sort of opposition to decaying bourgeois society.

I have to make this quite clear in a very concrete manner. And when I use the word "concrete" in these letters, as a general rule I have in mind a mode of expression, examples, etc., which can carry the conviction to the ordinary person.

The vanguard party conception ruined all attempts to form a Marxist party in the U.S. and contributed substantially to the catastrophes which have befallen it. What the vanguard party conception did to the U.S. Trotskyists was to make them think and act primarily of themselves and in opposition to other organizations which were challenging them for the position of embryo of the coming vanguard party. This means that their whole conception of who they were and what they had to do was governed by the necessity of establishing themselves, and in some way or other educating whomever they got into contact with, into the validity of their claim and the denunciation of the other rivals for the coveted position of leading the American masses to socialism. Look back at what they have done and what they have not done. It was between the limitation of making people understand that they were the vanguard party and the other people were not, that they lived, and this mentality governed every single thing they did. You all know them. Some of you have experienced them, you will be able to tell. I can only give you the most striking example that immediately comes to mind.

Look at the publications of the SWP.

They published a number of books by Trotsky, about the Comintern, about his conflicts with Stalin, about the Chinese Revolution, about the Spanish Revolution, etc., etc.

Cannon himself wrote on the building of the proletarian party, an internal party quarrel. He also published some supremely superficial reprints of some talks (he called them lectures) on the U.S. proletariat. After some forty years in the U.S. working-class movement, he has published absolutely nothing which gives some kind of view of the development of the American people or of the American proletariat. Absolutely blank.

As far as I know, Dobbs is the same. The whole lot of them. When an intellectual among them left them and thought of writing something, Mr. Burnham held forth on the Managerial Society.<sup>19</sup> The American people, the younger

intellectuals and the workers interested, as they were bound to be, in the life around them, in their own lives, in the lives of their own people, in the lives of those in their own country, learned from Marxism absolutely nothing.

I would be glad if you all in your discussions gave further examples and perhaps made lists of these publications. For the time being I merely wish to add that after a number of years, Max Shachtman is about to write his great work — upon what? The Communist International. I remember by chance that an American Marxist, his name was Weisbord, wrote two large volumes on the history of the Communist International. There was another, a Lovestonite intellectual [Isaac Deutscher], who wrote on Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. Harold Isaacs produced his great work on the Chinese Revolution. And most instructive, Sister Rae wrote her book on Leninism and then I gather went to Africa and has been holding forth in Britain and in the U.S. on the African Revolution. There are other examples, I am sure, that we can work out. On the American Revolution, on the American people, they have nothing to say. Some of them are people not without ability. What has happened is that their whole outlook and mentality have been dominated by the concept of the vanguard party which had to teach the people about Marxism, and other such matters which would make the people understand that they, the preachers, were the ones who should be followed as they were the leaders of the socialist revolution. I have been through this thing myself from start to finish and I know these people; I know what they think and why they think as they do. Please pay attention to this and get all traces of this poisonous mentality out of you.

I give you another example. First of all let me say that in a previous letter I pointed out how from the very beginning we have been different. Our total orientation was different from theirs. The list of our publications shows that. Whenever I think of what we were preparing to do on the Civil War, I feel, not bitterness, but the greatest regret for anything that was planned and didn't come off, more than I have ever felt about anything in political and mental life. (What would be very valuable is a list of our publications. Send it to me, please, and I shall be able to make notes on it.) This, if you please, is not only a clear example of the difference between us and them. It is also closely connected with activity undertaken by the Trotskyists and ourselves. They came to Detroit, and to the working class in general, in order to teach the working class and to make it realize that they were the vanguard party, and the destined leaders. We came to Detroit, and we did the work, as the British prayer book has it, in the sphere of life in which it had pleased God to call us. That we did. And we had certain successes to our credit. That you have to do and we have never failed in doing that, and I hope we shall never fail.

Not only because the working class needs the assistance we can give — but because we need it for the specific functions which we have to perform. Our entry into the proletariat was governed substantially by the recognition of the fact that without this contact with the proletariat, and, to put it plainly, without being able to learn from it, all our Marxism and therefore our Marxist organization was doomed to futility and failure. In every sphere you will find that this conception of the vanguard party dominated the Trotskyist movement, affected every single sphere of its activities, has ruined it and keeps it ruined.

I shall now go to the building of the organization and I shall do this in differing sections so that you will be able to discuss and if need be to postpone decisions or to vote, according to whatever circumstances you propose and decide. All through I hope there will be present the two points I have already made, first the state of the proletariat and the masses of the people, secondly, and this is very important for you to bear in mind, the demoralizing effect of the vanguard party.

#### The Building of the Organization I

An organization of this kind is built first of all and will long continue to be built by the accession of individuals, a group of two or three, and at times a dozen or a score. We must never forget that today, at one time, twenty people can join us; if you forget that, you don't know what you are doing and inevitably you are doing the wrong thing. I had intended to take up what I shall now say under section C; but I think you should bear it in mind in everything that follows. I haven't the slightest doubt that a proper Marxist organization which well before 1939 or even as late as 1939 had broken away from Stalinism and put itself on the correct road would today have at least five thousand members and, much more than that, be a powerful center for socialistic propaganda and organization. I haven't the slightest doubt of it, and what is more, we can apply those ideas to our own selves. If we had had our mind clear and I had not been sent away as I was, our own organization today would be a few hundred strong and a center, a known and accepted center, of Marxist theory and American and general analysis of society. I want you to understand and I shall go into it under section C, that that is what I had in mind. I am working with you all with that clear perspective and absolute personal certainty, that, particularly at the present time, we can aim at pulling together dozens and then scores of people. I shall go into that and my personal reasons for this, and the reasons for my personal certainty under C. But I am confident that most, if not all, of you are not aware of this and of

this objective perspective. That is why I have asked for special attention to be paid to this letter and why I am dealing with the specific subjects in the way that I'm doing.

To this must be added that today outside of the Stalin-Khrushchev monstrosity, the center of the world outside of that is in the U.S. You all have not only a moral responsibility but an objective necessity and advantage of being the center of Marxism and the Marxist application to all aspects of society today. Nobody believes in bourgeois society any more. Nobody. I repeat that. Nobody. There are some people who have positions and are holding on to those. There is a great mass of people who are going along from day to day. But one thing we shall have to do, and I am in a position to begin it at any rate, is to make clear the complete degeneration which exists today, everywhere, even within the bourgeoisie itself.

That opens the way to a Marxism which is not only intellectually comprehensive but objectively effective in what it attempts to do. That is what I am going to deal with in some detail now. But I tell it to you at once and do not reserve it, as I intended, so that you may be aware of this in various points that I now take up. You have to believe that you are going to build an organization. Unless you believe that, you will be nothing. You will need a lot of money. Very soon you will have to have not only an office but a typist and organizational secretary combined. As soon as is reasonably possible you will have to make your political leader, secretary or whatever you call him or her, a full-time person. Without that you can build nothing. I know that at once you say, that is all very well but where will we get the money from? The money; you believe, or, I shall not be rude, I prefer to say that people believe that you get money in order to carry out good politics. They are absolutely wrong. You carry out good politics and that brings in some money. All the money you require you will be able to get, in relation to your political activity and your political effectiveness. Let us now go into some details.

## The Building of the Organization II

In view of what I have been saying, and particularly in view of the total rejection of the vanguard party conception which must be the basis of all our activity, I have now to deal, briefly, but I hope effectively, with activity, and union activity in particular, of the organization.

Nothing that I have said and nothing that I will say is supposed to be an obstacle or a deterrent (fine word, isn't it? good modern word, deterrent), nothing must be considered as a deterrent to active participation in the work

of the proletariat or those who are carrying out some attack against one of the crimes which bourgeois society is imposing upon the mass of mankind.

I can best illustrate this by two examples, and I have no doubt that you all will be able to supply others.

a) In France in 1936 the French Trotskyist organization was very small. But one day, in the upheaval that took place, one of them in an organization of many thousands of workers put forward a very advanced program and stage by stage took it through, the organization accepted what became, for the time being at any rate, a national policy. Now note this please. A good Marxist can individually and with the help of his organization carry through such practical work, build himself deep into a mass organization, in fact, wherever possible members of a small organization should be doing that. That is not at all the same thing as asking to build a vanguard party. I hope the difference is clear.

b) The second example I shall mention in general, although I believe that we ought to have among our papers a copy of the action. I shall only tell you in general terms. One of our people some years ago found himself chairman of a small branch of a tremendous mass organization. The leader of the organization was carrying on a great national struggle against the government. The whole nation was interested. The leader, in the capital, came to the conclusion that he and his organization were defeated, and he sent a message around to the innumerable branches telling them that defeat was inevitable and they should quiet down and take it. He had his boys in the particular little unit I am speaking of, and they, of course, were prepared to put through the policy of the boss. Our man in the chair moved quickly and proposed that as the matter had come up late it should be postponed until next time. It was a defensive maneuver, to give some time to the workers to think over things a bit. As far as I remember, there was nothing more or very little more in his proposal. The proposal was accepted—with national consequences. After the branch meeting one of the members said that he didn't see why they should accept defeat. They would see about the struggle themselves. Next morning at, I think, about four o'clock, he and some of his friends got into a car and went around the district telling local leaders not to work, to come out, not to pay any attention to the decision of the national leader to accept defeat. Tens of thousands came out. Within a day or two hundreds of thousands had come out. A tremendous victory was won and when the national leader sent around to give the final news he made it clear that he had been defeated and that the victory was due entirely to the independent activity of the rank and file. I am not saying that nothing at all would have hap-

pened if our man had not taken the steps which he did. The fact remains, however, that in branch after branch and there were hundreds of them all over the country, the decision of the national leader had been accepted. He, however, was in a position to do something about it and he did, with the consequences I have indicated. I shall be glad if anyone has among his papers a copy of the report that was made to our center.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, I will add that after a certain amount of contact had been made in Detroit with two or three dozen workers by an intellectual who had never been near a factory in all his life, but showed not only sympathy but a grasp of what was going on, many of the workers were prepared to discuss their situation with him and his opinions of the various policies that occupied them.

Finally, I want it absolutely clear, and I am sure that with Marty holding the position that he does with you, that aspect of a small Marxist organization will continue and nevertheless be in no way confused with the conception and practice and theory of the vanguard party.

### The Building of the Organization III

I have now to deal with the question of theory very briefly. I have got merely to list the chief points:

a) There is first of all the foundation on which we rest, *State Capitalism and World Revolution*. This is an unshakable base. First, you will notice that those persons who have left us can find no political objection. They scurry around and find some phony reason. You will remember that Bauer<sup>21</sup> and company, for example, left the SWP on some basis of the attitude of Pablo.<sup>22</sup> Pablo also found the SWP position on Stalinism wrong, and then came back. I don't know where he is today. The story of the Trotskyist movement and of the revolutionary groupings on the whole is full of such political splits. Personally, I shall tell you in the next section, I don't believe in them at all. But the political position they wish to leave was vulnerable and they took the opportunity. We stand unshaken and unshakable. All sorts of political organizations, not only small ones but larger ones — political personages like Roosevelt and Churchill — even the various Communist Parties, particularly the Italian Communist Party — in passing the Social Democratic Party of Italy; vast numbers of politicians and people in Russia itself consistently show that each and every single one of them gets into obvious confusion and insoluble difficulties as to what Stalinism is. Their mistake and their confusion fill the atmosphere every day. With that document written in 1951 we remain unshaken. That is our foundation. When the time comes and we do the work on

that document that has not been done in ten years, you will be able to understand and absorb its basic strength and, you will see in time, its range.

b) I have already asked you to do what we did with the Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts. We were years in advance. Now all we have to do is get the Trade Union debate and the general debates of the Congresses of 1921 and, of course, the account published in 1927 of the 1917 activities of the Russian Factory Committees, and once more, and this time we will do it properly, we shall do what the Marxist organization has the right and the privilege to do, be a genuine vanguard of the socialist movement. That is merely one stage. There are others ahead.

c) I want you to go through the list of our previous publications and to realize that alone of the Marxist groups we were establishing the premises and getting ready for a Marxist analysis of the people, and the relations connected with them, of the U.S. All that is no accident. It is because we laid the foundations never forget, and always had the perspectives of doing what a Marxist organization should do. Not playing at being the vanguard party, getting ready, all sixty of us, to lead nearly two hundred million people in the U.S.A. in the socialist revolution. Let the Trotskyists and the State Department share that illusion between them. Note by the way that the Stalinists do not share that illusion, not they. You will be able to see in time, I hope you know it already, that they are depending everywhere upon the Russian army to defeat the bourgeois armies and to install them in power. That leaves the State Department and the Trotskyists in complete charge of the theory of the vanguard party.

d) Bear this in mind and know that if we continue with those ideas that I have expounded, and seriously absorbed what is correct and thoroughly reject what is wrong, we cannot fail in producing a paper which will represent those conceptions and that policy.

All that I have to say about theory and its practical effects is contained in the above. To all that I have to add only this, and you ought to know it by now. In the increasing demoralization of bourgeois society and the approximation in political activity of the two blocs, vast numbers of people are looking for something. I have heard only recently from someone in a position to know, from someone who knows them intimately, that what is noticeable among the functionaries and leading elements in the Labor Party organization in Great Britain, is the total absence of any political ideas. That was not always so. They are forced into that emptiness and bankruptcy today. What political ideas can they build? On what political basis? This vast emptiness is around on every side. For example, you will know best if I am correct in saying that

this emptiness is most repulsive to you, and that there are in the U.S. today on the campuses, numbers of youth who are looking for something. From all that I have heard and the little that I have seen, that is taking place everywhere. Even the American government itself is aware of what it calls the lack of national purpose. These people are there. Please do not make the mistake of not knowing that there are more people of that kind among the workers than there are among the intellectuals. They (the workers) are harder to get because they are people accustomed to dealing with serious and fundamental matters and they have their own experiences of facts and ideas which correspond to them. What they will have nothing to do with is people who come to them telling them to join those who are about to lead the socialist revolution. The proof of this, in so far as it can be proven (for to be able to see this, to recognize it, requires some knowledge of theory) will have to rest with you. You will have to know this, you will have to be convinced of it. Otherwise you can't work seriously.

I am writing in sections. You discuss section by section and say what you think. It will take two, possibly three, discussions. It does not matter. The problem, as I see it, is to know what you are going to do and what are the prospects you have of doing something effective. The theory is sound and has all the elements of progress. The people we have to deal with are there. You must be as sure of that as I am. There is, however, another aspect to this matter of the small organization, and that I shall deal with now.

#### The Building of the Organization IV

People can be impressed with a theory, especially if they are informed of it often and are able to judge of its validity. They are also anxious to join something. But they will only join something that seems to be going somewhere and that seems to have the correct people. The idea that they will join only a huge organization that is leading the working class is a lot of nonsense. It is a stupidity which is the direct result of the theory of the vanguard party. But people, and particularly Americans, must feel that what they are joining or what they are being asked to join is not only active but effective and businesslike.

That has been entirely missing from our organization since I left it. You all have not the slightest idea of how to act in a way and how to make your presence felt in a way that will attract people, the kind of people who are interested in what you have to say. I shall spend some time on this. We had better go into it so that we will know what we are doing and what to expect.

You sent me the other day what purported to be an account of your conference. I know more or less the weaknesses, the feebleness of the organization; but that conference report made it very clear to me that I had to take it upon myself to get down to business with you. Whom do you think would be encouraged to join an organization or consider joining at some time, with a conference report of that kind?

Let me begin at once by telling you what form that report should have taken.

First of all it should have had the summons to the conference and the proposed subjects on the agenda. That should have gone out, and have been printed in the report. Then you should have stated how many people came to the conference and from where they came, etc. Then there should have been the appointment of a secretary who would draft a report. That, if you please, is the report of a conference, the kind of report that you need, you, yourselves, and the kind of report that people who know about your theory and like it, will recognize as a report coming from serious people for serious people. Then must come the first session. You will say in the report (you will pardon me if I have to go into these elementary things) when the first session began and if you were late. You will then give an account of the discussion. These can be very brief, sometimes three or four lines and in certain cases ten lines. Then you come to the decisions that were taken at the morning session, the time you left and the time you appointed for the afternoon session. If you change chairmen in the afternoon, you put that in. You also give a concise but full report of what took place. You state the motions, you state how many voted for, and how many against. I hope I need not go any further. At the end of the report you ask when the conference report will be ready. If there is a party, then note it.

This means that there is a full report of the activities and temper of a certain set of people. It is important for you to know what you did, how you did it and at a later stage you have an executive report maybe, which will start from where the conference left off and rigorously deal with the decisions, proposals, mistakes and omissions of the conference. You know that, you live by that. That is the structure which holds you together. But there is far more to it. I keep telling you to print one hundred copies at least, of all you print, all your documents, including the report. Some you distribute to your contacts; you keep the others. In time to come you distribute those to new people. For example, I am very much concerned with what activity I myself shall carry on. I simply am depending to a substantial degree on what you do, on your reports of activity, on your publications. If anybody asks me who you all

are and what you are doing I shall be able nine months or a year from now, to hand over a set of reports, documents, etc., and say these are the people. Never be afraid that you will not find people who will respond to such disciplined and organized activity.

If I am proposing to do that here, what about you in the U.S. and the people whom we shall impress by the excellence of our ideas and the political and journalistic skill with which we expound them? I repeat, that conference report was a complete disaster. It could mean nothing to people who are of a serious turn of mind and are ready to commit themselves but only to something serious. I think that I have said enough about conference reports, reports of executive committees, etc., the more important organizational meetings, and the way in which you publish them for yourselves and for people who are attracted to you in one way or another. Unless you take yourselves seriously, others will not. Here again you have the opportunity to discuss, to decide and then to vote if need be as to how you are going to carry on your business in the future. There may be people who are interested in what you are doing and will take six months or more before they finally decide to come in with you. Do your reports properly and have them waiting, along with your political analyses and your popular statements, for your own sake, and for an increasing circle of people whom you will meet. Have them ready. I am asking you for a dozen of everything. I will need, I am certain, that many and as time goes on I will need more. Please discuss, decide and function in that way.

### The Building of the Organization V

The precision and the effect that you give of concentration and a serious attitude to whatever you may be doing is absolutely necessary, particularly in relation to the breadth and scope of our general analyses. People will only take those seriously, the general analyses I mean, when they see that whatever work you put your hand to, you do it with utmost seriousness. Otherwise, inevitably the general analyses assume the impression of just being a lot of talk.

Now the beginning of seriousness of activity starts with yourselves and with the work you do for yourselves. At the present time, and maybe in the future also, although in a different form, what is decisive is what you do with these letters. I received a letter from Marty recently in which he gives me details of the organizational steps you have taken to reproduce your own material. These things you know best and have to decide them yourselves. I am glad you have reached as far as you have done. Now these letters have not been circulated as I have suggested they should be. That must be corrected

at once. Everyone must have his own copies of the letters, all of them, from the very beginning because they constitute a sequence. This letter is fairly long and I aim at more or less a complete statement of general attitude that we should have to our business.

Closely connected with this letter I shall do what is not so urgent for a decision on your part, but which must be read in relation to your plans. As soon as possible after this one, I shall go into organizational relations and the personal attitude of an individual to the organization. I paid the most scrupulous attention to every aspect of this question when I was with you. But it was a question I know is most dangerous to talk about and personally I was disinclined. However, I did it. It is obvious that all of you must from now have an idea of this. Therefore, as I say, I shall send you another letter on which you will not have to vote but which is very necessary in order for you to have a comprehensive conception of what I am trying to say.

After that one, I shall stop. I shall stop until you have gotten all of your affairs in order, have been able to read and discuss these letters and discuss this one in an organized manner and express an attitude to its different sections. That is going to take you some time. Just do it quietly and systematically. However, when you have done it, we will have to take up the question of future letters. This is what I shall now suggest and of course you all decide and let me know.

I believe that the next set of letters should deal with fundamental economic problems and related matters in the period of what I shall call the Sixties. In addition to what I have observed and what I think necessary for the small Marxist organization, I shall insert some important quotations and passages from the classics and from contemporary newspapers, etc., which I think relevant. What I shall be doing is this. I shall be stating the basic economic developments of the day on a world scale. Then the objective results in the development of the proletariat, the capitalist class and the intermediate classes. Next I shall take up politics in the nineteen-sixties and by politics I mean Marxist politics. I shall refer specifically to Great Britain which I know best, but also the U.S. Those will probably take three letters, no more than four. Understand what I am doing. I am preparing us for a mentality and an attitude to the fundamental Marxist approach to the problems of the day. I don't know that I have ever seen this anywhere within recent years or for a long time. The SWP and the WP, which must be our main terms of reference, at least the terms of reference that I shall make to you, periodically at a convention made some general statement in which what the party had to do was immediately and vulgarly related to what was supposed to be the general economic and political situation. Politics today is fundamentally different from

what it was in the nineteen-fifties and still more different from the nineteen-forties. We, that is to say, people in general, have made tremendous advances: either the socialist society on a world scale, please note that, on a world scale, or destruction, a total descent into barbarism. That is where we are.

Now the next set of letters after those three or four will deal or rather raise the question of how and what we shall produce as a weekly newspaper. In this second set of letters I shall go into detail as to the kind of material, the range of material, the method of treatment, the development of the comrades' writing ability and all that goes into the publication of an effective newspaper. But in order to be able to do this, the members of the organization and all those people who are around us who may be interested today or who may become more interested tomorrow, they must have certain basic conceptions and attitudes to society which they must share, if even in places they have serious disagreements. You share the disagreements. So that, to repeat, first our general analyses of world economics and politics, and then after that, with the previous letters and that in mind, a statement of how we should approach the question of the paper. That I shall go into in detail. Without that, without some such approach, we do not know what we are doing. And not only we do not know, but we are unable to convince or convert people, and we shall be given to much idle squabbling among ourselves about unimportant things.

There is now something which I must say at once. To the organizational aspect of it I shall refer in the letter which is to be attached to this one. But the fact itself is something which you do not know and which expressed your total incapacity to have understood what was required of you. I refer to the split with J[im] and G[race]. Look at that document which I wrote immediately and the letters accompanying it.<sup>23</sup> I realized early that we were in for a very serious break with Marxism and it was best to meet it head on and without pulling any punches. But that we had to do it was our fault and our responsibility. What the split should have come on, what any split in the small organization should always come on, is a program of the kind which I have outlined in these recent letters, against another program or no program at all. I say this because I am convinced and I want to show you in the letter that is to be attached, that in these small organizations when splits take place, despite the profundities of the political analyses that were made, in reality they are due to one thing and to one thing only. The people are tired of the kind of life they are living and the activity they are carrying on, and they wish to get out of it. That is not an easy matter to illustrate and learn. Fundamental attitudes of this kind can easily be expressed and something of them will be expressed in serious political terms. To be able to distinguish between the per-

sonal attitude and the political attitude leads you into psychology which is the ruin of everybody concerned.

Nevertheless, the political organizer, the political leaders, and in the small Marxist organization everybody is a political leader, must see to two things and two things only. First, his basic political position must be sound and must be able to meet with events and remain sound. Secondly, his program, or I should say, your program, your method of procedure, what I am doing now must be, for example, as clear as a political analysis. Nothing was clear, no program, when J[im] and G[race] split. I who had to write the document realized that to have a split in a small organization and be talking not about what you were doing or what you proposed to do, but of the fundamentals of Marxism, was a disaster. That discussion, that difference, could mean nothing to the people who were around us, nothing from which they could learn and around which their activity or their developing need for an activity could center. As it was, we could claim, and legitimately claim, that they, the opposition, had broken away from Marxism. OK. They had broken away from Marxism. So what? Many thousands of workers had broken away from Marxism. The world had not changed thereby. We were just what we were before. Only we were worse. But I hope you realize the immense difference it would have made if we could have faced them with a program of this kind and perspectives. They would have had to put forward theirs. Or they would have had to realize that they wanted to go elsewhere. I want to repeat. The fact that the split took place over the letter I had to write, and it is only now that we are mobilizing ourselves with a comprehensive firmly based program and perspective, that shows me clearly what we did not do. I hope it is as clear to you. Unless it is, you will merely repeat the same mess as before.

Let me get back to what I have been talking about in this section.

I think that the new series of letters should be one per week. I think that you should more or less organize yourselves so that everyone knows that he will receive his letter for his own use and the letters that he has requested to be able to hand out at such and such a time. I believe, in fact I know, you will have to work out as accurately as possible the kind of paper you are going to use, how much it will cost, which will mean you will then know how many copies you will be able to make every week. I have been saying one hundred copies and asking for a dozen of everything. I don't know how much it will cost to have one letter done. I believe that you might very well have three or four lines printed on the upper part of a page and every copy will have that as page one and various advertisements of our material, etc., on the inside of that page. You see what I am trying to inculcate. To begin now and to begin with yourselves and your circle a systematic preparation of ideas and organi-



zation of material. It may be that you can only afford fifty copies of each. I would like to know that you could do a hundred. I want to say again that you must have many in reserve, and it is by this systematic exposition of your ideas and your organization that you attract the attention and ultimately the cooperative activity of people.

One last word on these proposals and even the analyses of the next two series of letters. And what I say now refers to the past letters also. I can only indicate a line of approach. On that matter, as I shall show in the next section of this letter, I am very clear and firm. If you don't do more or less as I am proposing to you, you will get nowhere. Of that I am absolutely certain. But at this distance I can only give you as clearly as possible, even in theoretical questions, the general direction. You will have to work it out yourselves. I am not laying down laws. That is why I suggest a careful circulation of the letters, careful and systematic, and also bringing in of other people. You will have to decide. But what you have to decide, as I see it, as I know it, is how you are going to carry out after full and complete discussions what I am proposing to you.

### C. Myself

This is going to be tough. I have been thinking about it for a long time. But you can't easily get rid of the attitudes and practices, successful experience of many years. But I have to tell you a few things about myself and its relation to what we are doing. I have to write it down because I am not there in person, not to tell you instead of writing it, but to carry it out and to convey what I wish to convey by actions and proposals and theoretical discussions and slight but quite important personal relations. I shall not write it down but the personal relations by which G[race] finally became integrated and effective in our organization I shall deal with in the letter which I say shall be an attachment to this one. The other day, quite by accident, I came across a brief note which I wrote to her at a certain time, and that made up my mind. I said, to hell with it, I shall tell you all about it, not to learn about G. but to learn about yourselves. I shall try to be as brief as possible, though I know I should be as lengthy as possible. However, here goes.

a) I have now had about thirty years of working in small organizations. I have worked in the Independent Labor Party which was a small organization that had four or five members of Parliament. I have worked in the Trotskyist organization which was inside the ILP. I worked in it when it came out. I came to the U.S. and worked in the SWP; then split from the SWP and worked in the WP. Inside the WP I organized a small organization of my own. I took the or-

ganization into the SWP and then split away and started independently. During the last five years I have been engaged in functioning with what structurally was in essence a small organization beginning at the beginning. During some of this time I was in the leadership of the international Trotskyist organization and took part in its various conferences, etc. I have been a member of and worked in close association with the British Labor Party.

Now during this period, I am able to say first that I was extremely successful in building the kind of organization and in making the kind of effect I aimed at. Never was that more clear than when I, a Marxist of the small organization, went to work in the West Indies.

Within the scope of what was possible, particularly in regard to the effect on the people whom I aimed at, or whom it was my business to aim at, I have no complaints to make, nothing to be ashamed of. Please do not forget that I worked with Padmore, Jomo Kenyatta and the others who built up the organization from which was launched the emancipation of Africa. That, too, was a small organization. And there I saw both in theory and in practice one of the greatest organizers of a small organization I have ever seen, George Padmore.

In addition to the above, I was able to draw to myself and my perspectives and policies some of the best people it was possible to get. I have made that clear already. You do not pick up people like the people we had up to some years ago, you do not pick them up and be able to develop their very great capacities except you have something to offer them. In other words, unless you have something that develops them. Bear that in mind, please, we shall come back to it often.

b) However all that is merely background and very necessary background for you to read over and to study and study and discuss, to what concerns us here today. The facts of the case that are relevant are these. When we split from the WP I wrote after discussion a balance sheet which in reality was a treatment, a study of the small organization inside the Marxist organization. Note, please, that except for Cannon's building of the proletarian party, I don't know anywhere else where that has been done. When we split from the SWP another analysis was made of the functioning of the small organization in a previous Marxist organization and the necessity and perspectives of breaking away. Nobody else that I know, certainly not in the U.S., so consistently and seriously related the small organization to its particular environment. I had to leave the U.S. unfortunately, most unfortunately. However, in 1957 in *Facing Reality* I addressed myself fully and completely, I believe for the first time in the Marxist movement, to the analysis of the small organization. And the analysis of the small organization as such meant a certain attitude to the ways and means that now faced us in the building of a large organization, a

mass party. There for the first and only time the thing was done. I went to the West Indies and there from the very start I initiated a certain line of approach. The result has been the book, *Party Politics in the West Indies*, in which I treat of the building of an organization in an undeveloped territory and also, as must be done, relate the organization to the general social situation of the country in which you are building it. So that over the years, in addition to the political analyses, etc., I have paid special and consistent theoretical attention on the basis of practice, upon the building of the small Marxist organization. In relation to what I am trying to do now, it is, if you will allow me to say so, a very impressive background. I know what I am about; it is the result of many years of Marxist and Leninist theory and practice centering around this particular objective, the building of the small Marxist organization.

I am aware that something is happening now which makes the task I am attempting of peculiar difficulty. When I was with you all, I was pursuing the same objectives in the same manner, but because I knew where I was going, among other things, and always judged by the empirical results of a theory, for that and for other reasons, I had authority. I had authority with the organization and I had authority with persons outside the organization: more than any of you can suspect the authority that I have had with people far removed from the organization, and am to this very day able to exercise is due not merely to some exceptional personal qualities which I have always had (it is no use shirking a plain statement of fact), but due to the fact that such qualities as I possess are disciplined, stimulated and organized by my contact and relations with the organization and with the time and with the people with whom I have functioned. That authority of which I speak goes far beyond what even the best of you may think. It was not only an authority which allowed me to maintain order and discipline inside the organization—it was an authority which allowed me to make the necessary empirical observations, and propose the necessary empirical activities for the organization, by which a theory is made real and effective and by which it is also strengthened as a theory.

That form of authority is now beyond us. There is only one way in which it can be effectively renewed and strengthened. That way, both in regard to yourselves, the people whom you have to deal with and in regard to me, is the most careful and systematic doing of whatever you think has to be done to carry out what I am proposing. This is easy to express. It is not too easy to understand. But we have one advantage. You all are people who I think have reached this stage, where the Marxist outlook on life has become a part of your conception and experience of existence. We will now see what we will see. I merely repeat that I constantly had to bring to G[race] and R[ae] that they were ready to spend weeks on a single sentence of Hegel and of Marx

but did not spend the necessary time on the analysis and procedure of the organization. I have given you the evidence that has been from start to finish my primary concern. I am trying to transfer not only the results of my experience but also to transfer to you the habit of thinking and of working on Marxism, always with the perspectives of doing what you have to do and that, in this case, is the building of an organization. I can go no farther with this.

c) The last point I have to make is that personally I am more than ever engaged in building the organization and in earning my living. The earning of my living to me would be a comparatively simple matter, except that I always try to combine it with some effective manifestation of what I am strictly concerned with, the building of the organization. For the time it looks as if I will be able to manage. Nevertheless, the strain is very great. You would hardly guess the amount of time and, in the future, the amount of time and actual investigation and collection of material which I will have to spend in doing for you those two series of letters. I appeal to your good will, your sympathy, your humanity, your Marxist aspirations, etc., etc. But I also appeal to your determination to do precisely and with organizational attention and concentration what I propose. There lies the solution of all the things I have been talking about. I now have to send you a letter on organization on which you will not have to vote. But on this one, as I have outlined it, you have something precise to do.

Till next time,

Yours,

J.

PS. I have asked you to make a list of all of the things we have published from our very beginning. I want you to know that at this time I am working on Lenin and on Shakespeare. Also I have had in mind for some time an article or a letter to you on Whitman in relation to some work that one of you is doing. We have been very deficient on American history and also on modern science. I mention these things because there are people around us, and there will be, people who will bring qualifications and faculties that we have not been able as yet to touch. We must make up our minds to deal with them all. We shall be able to do that. But only if we do with the necessary care and concentration and discipline what lies before us to do. The rest will follow.

PPS. Please carefully work out the space between the lines of your publications. These letters, for example, are closely spaced. For the public, even our small public, I feel certain the space should be wider. I draw it to your attention. You will decide.

[Three meetings were held to discuss these letters. Minutes of these meetings were included in the mimeographed publication of the letters. They seem to be too abridged to convey an understandable record of the discussions. There were differences between members and non-members, with members often in the position of being defensive about James's letters and non-members being more critical. There was general acceptance of the need to work on certain pamphlets—on Leninism, on China, on Cuba, on Negroes and the Civil War, on automation, etc. A committee was formed to approach William Gorman to lecture on the Civil War and there was an attempt to begin the necessary work on the Russian factory committees. Most of the assignments bore only partial fruit. The work on the factory committees and on the Civil War was only partly done.<sup>24</sup> Ultimately, a mimeographed bulletin called *Speak Out* was published for a few years. In 1962 and 1963 the resources of the group were extremely limited. There were about a half-dozen members. There was no office. The chairman of the group worked full time in a factory, etc. A sign of the limitations of the organization was the inability to do a decent, legible job in mimeographing the letters. Another sign of a problem was the fact that most of the non-members dropped out of the discussions after the first meeting. — *editor's note.*]

## Notes

1. These letters were addressed to the Facing Reality Publishing Committee through its chairman, Martin Glaberman. This text is taken from the mimeographed version, transcribed with modifications from the original letters. The typing and mimeography were less than adequate. Corrections are indicated where necessary without being too pedantic and making the text difficult to read.
2. The previous organization, known as Correspondence Publishing Committee, was decimated by a split led by Grace and James Boggs and Lyman and Freddy Paine. Earlier, in 1955, there was a major split led by Raya Dunayevskaya.
3. Raya Dunayevskaya, *Marxism and Freedom*, New York: Bookman Associates, 1958.
4. C. L. R. James, Grace C. Lee and Cornelius Castoriadis, *Facing Reality*, Detroit: Bewick Editions, 1974.
5. C. L. R. James, Raya Dunayevskaya and Grace C. Lee, *The Invading Socialist Society*, Detroit: Bewick Editions, 1972.
6. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993. First published in London in 1937 by Martin Secker and Warburg, Ltd. A Kraus reprint was published in Liechtenstein in 1972.
7. New York: Random House (Vintage Books), 1963.
8. Activists in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa were circulating copies secretly, using them as weapons in the struggle.
9. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Co., 1986.

10. C. L. R. James, *Notes on Dialectics: Hegel, Marx, Lenin*, London: Allison & Busby, 1980. It was initially called "The Nevada Document" because its original form was letters sent by James from Nevada.

11. Paul Romano [Phil Silver] and Ria Stone [Grace C. Lee], *The American Worker*, Detroit: Bewick Editions, 1972.

12. *The Balance Sheet* published in August 1947 by the Johnson-Forest Tendency, was subtitled *Trotskyism in the United States, 1940–47; The Workers Party and the Johnson-Forest Tendency*. It was signed by J. R. Johnson [C. L. R. James], F. Forest [Raya Dunayevskaya] and Martin Harvey [Martin Glaberman]. It should be noted that Glaberman was not in New York when the document was prepared and took no part in the preparation. Adding his name to the authors was a collective political decision. *The Balance Sheet Completed* was a mimeographed document, published in 1953 upon the departure of the Tendency from the Socialist Workers Party.

13. New York: C. L. R. James, 1953. An edition without the last chapter was published by Bewick Editions in Detroit in 1978.

14. Matthew Ward, *Indignant Heart*, New York: New Books, 1952. Later editions were published under the alternative pseudonym, Charles Denby.

15. Isaac Deutscher, *Soviet Trade Unions*, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1950, Note 1, p. 16, *Oktyabrskaya Revoliutsiya i Fabzavkomy* [The October Revolution and the Factory Committees], Moscow, 1927.

16. This was the home of Lyman and Freddy Paine, and provided a home for the Johnson-Forest Tendency.

17. Lenin, "Letter to the Congress," *Collected Works*, vol. 36, pp. 593–99, esp. p. 595. This was often referred to as Lenin's Last Will and Testament.

18. See note 15, above.

19. See note 14, Chapter I.

20. The organization was the United Mine Workers of America, led by John L. Lewis, involved in a battle with the United States government. The individual involved was in a small branch of our organization in Morgantown, West Virginia.

21. Erwin Bauer was a leader of the SWP in Detroit and was active in the UAW.

22. Pablo was Michel Raptis Speros, a leader of the Trotskyist Fourth International in Europe.

23. See C. L. R. James, et al., *Marxism and the Intellectuals*, Detroit: Facing Reality Publishing Committee, May 1962.

24. The book on factory committees was not found. However, working on the present book triggered a new search and a copy of the Russian book was located helped by the interest and help of University of Michigan Professors Deming Brown and William G. Rosenberg, so that the project is once again a possibility.