

# **Let's be friends - A letter from ISO (USA) to the SWP (GB) and the IST**

Thursday 11 December 2008, by [ISO \(USA\)](#) (Date first published: 5 December 2008).

**To the Central Committee of the Socialist Workers Party (GB) and the International Socialist Tendency from the Steering Committee of the International Socialist Organization (U.S.)**

**5 December 2008**

We write as the world economy faces its greatest turning point in decades. A crisis of imperialism has become intertwined with grave ecological threats and a profound crisis of capitalism itself. This is a moment of challenge and opportunity for the revolutionary left, in which intensified, and more politicized and polarized social, political, and ideological struggle will be the order of the day. In this context, it is important to address the relationship between two of the largest revolutionary Marxist organizations in the English-speaking world—the SWP-GB (the leading organization in the International Socialist Tendency) and the ISO-U.S.

This is not the time to reopen the discussion about the rift between our organizations. For the record, we still believe that the basis for our expulsion from the International Socialist Tendency (IST) was mistaken. Our parting of ways involved no questions of political principle, but rather only conjunctural and tactical questions. But any continuing disagreements notwithstanding, it would be sectarian for us not to have relations because of different assessments of the 1999 “Battle of Seattle” anti-WTO protests and the “anti-capitalist movement” or because of differences over the “theory of the 1930s in slow motion.”

In the current period, the fragmentation of revolutionary socialist organizations with common political traditions is particularly damaging—and is, given the absence of principled differences, inexcusable. It is incumbent upon revolutionary socialists to forge ties with revolutionary forces internationally as fully as possible. We do not claim that our judgment in all matters has been infallible—no revolutionary organization in the world today can or should, and certainly neither the ISO nor the SWP and IST can pretend otherwise. It should be possible, however, to examine and debate these issues in a comradely and open manner. Since our expulsion from the IST in 2001, we have established relationships with a range of revolutionary organizations and tendencies, both from within and outside historic Trotskyist currents.

The obvious gap in our international work is the lack of any formal or systematic collaboration with the IST. Despite a history of close collaboration—from the ISO's founding in 1977 until our expulsion from the IST in 2001—contact between our organizations all but ceased. In our view, our organizations should share the same type of relationship that the ISO enjoys, for example, with the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire and the Fourth International—exchanging speakers at educational conferences, writing for one another's publications, and regular contact between our leadership to discuss perspectives and to raise the profile of revolutionary Marxism internationally. We have similar relations with several other groups internationally. Over the last few years, our organizations have recruited comrades who did not experience the polemics of the past and for whom the lack of relations between our two formations is incomprehensible.

For all the reasons stated above, the ISO Steering Committee seeks to reestablish formal and comradely relations with the SWP-GB and the leaderships of the member groups of the IST. It is impossible to politically explain—or justify—why organizations that share so much in common have had no relations while our respective governments launched— and continue—an imperialist project to reshape the Middle East and the world.

To be clear, we are not seeking to rejoin the IST. While we welcome any opportunity to work with IST comrades, we believe that the task of rebuilding the international revolutionary left is best carried out through an approach that promotes genuine collaboration between all currents committed to the socialist transformation of society.

We trust that the leaderships of the IST organizations will seriously consider this proposal. In view of the crisis and the speed with which it is developing, we believe that it is best to reestablish ties between our organizations sooner rather than later. We propose three concrete steps in an effort to reopen collaboration:

1. Establish a formal means of communication and collaboration between the leaderships of our respective organizations.
2. Establish a procedure for inviting speakers to each other's annual internal and educational conferences.
3. Exchange articles in our publications and, if appropriate, exchange views—of course, along with others—on perspectives, in the context of the larger debates on the revolutionary left in Europe, Latin America, Asia, and elsewhere.

Comradely, and awaiting your response,

The Steering Committee of the International Socialist Organization

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**P.S.**

\* This letter was posted on December 10, 2008 by Liam:

<http://liammacuaid.wordpress.com/2008/12/10/lets-be-friends/>