

March 23, 1971  
Brussels

Dear John and John

I received both your letters--and an envelope from Art this morning but unfortunately Art's letter contained nothing but the text of the Independent Quebec document as it appeared in La Lutte for Pierre which as I had told him should go to Paris. It came airmail too so it is all the more difficult to understand that there were not even be a little note

I must say that I am very uneasy about the whole situation...and I find it hard to know how to grasp the problem. For instance I do not know what the minority political line is. What was it at Vieux Montreal? But in general what is it? Do I understand that they have the opinion that a youth movement is no longer a viable proposition? And that they go so far as not wanting us to bother putting out a youth paper when for some reason we gave them the majority on the editorial board?

As you probably know from everything that I hear the French are moving to build a youth organization. They are publishing a youth paper --high school oriented. This is really where the action is right now in France. The weekend I arrived the high school students took over the main centers of Paris in a massive protest against the frame-up and imprisonment of a young high school student---and they forced a massive retreat by the government, the courts and the police. And right now there are whole rash of struggles in school after school across France--many are being closed down by the authorities. I think I sent you a copy of the first issue of the youth paper. It was apparently a big success and Alain told me yesterday in the process of exchanging a few words that they are putting it out on a monthly basis. Those are the simple facts which our Montreal minority with Leon reading Le Monde must know. And what has happened in Quebec for them to take a position --out with the youth organization and a youth paper. The French are ultra left but I do not have the impression that Mike and that group are ultra left. ~~What is the~~ My impression is that they have never identified with the line of The Red Mole on terrorism, on the Tupamero etc.

So I don't understand the politics and I don't hear any proposals that would come to grips with that. So we have a clique, who make an uneven and in some cases no positive work contribution, who talk over a coffee and disorient new youth, make it difficult for those comrades such as Manon who want to carry the ball to devote themselves to the work. And we have a situation where for instance some comrade like Colleen with there is no element of political disagreement who think other comrades in some ways conduct themselves in such a way as show overconcern and create an uneasy atmosphere which I would gather she thinks in some way plays into the hands of the minority

Then I don't understand this talk about "withdrawing" the minority from the youth. I see this word is not used accidentally but it strikes me as odd with draw the minority.----instead of kicking them out. It suggests that they would be agreeable while we continue on with the youth organization less them. Would they agree. I don't get it. And if they did not agree how would you be able to carry it. It would seem to me that there would be a big scandal not only in the League to which they would appeal but in the world movement. This seems so obvious that I say that I do not understand.

I gather that we are agreed over there to the idea of dropping Jeune Garde. Well I don't think there is any principal involved. In general I would think that it would be seen as a step back however really one has to know the complete picture to have a firm opinion on this proposal. It is no doubt a lot of work to put out Jeune Garde with the limited forces we have at our disposal and after having put it out it is a big job to circulate it. If it doesn't bring youth comrades into its circulation who at this time do not understand the importance of La Lutte then there is a question about our continuing to put it out. Real concrete specific problems may well make it justifiable, even good that we dump Jeune Garde and expand La Lutte. But it cannot be for any suggestion that the youth are not the main effort of concentration for us. I see ~~max~~ from Pat Jordan's draft of their political resolution that the British are contemplating fusing the Spartacus with IMG--after it has failed to give them that qualitative size change they oriented themselves to get and an existence of about 6 short months. They are now moving off into a ouvrier-ist direction. There has been a decline in the youth radicalization they claim like many of the new left and like many of them they are now swining into the working class--which will of course be in vain. This ouvrier-ism is now a common development in the new left and some of our European sections---from ultra-leftism to sectarianism to ---what-----

What more can I say? I am of course worried about Art. I thought that he showed many of the symptoms of exhaustion when I was last there and this whole development tends to affirm that opinion. What are we going to do about it. Can we give him a holiday? Perhaps he and I should switch for a couple of months. This would be highly reasonable--even profitable for the period of May 8th (the Belgian first congress) through the Paris Commune action in Paris to the French congress March 30--31st--and if thought advisable to the IMG congress June 19 and 20th. I think you should consider this. But maybe we should consider a more long ranging change---pull Art out and send someone else in. Of course the someone else would have to be someone like John Riddell.

Then I am concerned also about Alan B who has moved in so boldly and generally so effectively. This could be quite demoralizing for him, ~~max~~ there is some possibility of this in that we do not have a real team there yet. I do not know how to read Marion's intentions

While I am at the typewriter I should perhaps say something about Dick's response to his hearing my comments to Naomi about their coming here after my six months...and John's enquiries as to what staying here means and would mean particularly for Naomi.

First I am somewhat surprised at Dick's reaction. It is true sometime decisions are made ~~max~~, or the framework for a decision pretty well outlined and circumscribed outside of the top bodies of the movement. ~~max~~ That is inevitable--even correct. Dick feels out of things often when he really isn't. But I could swear that at the PC we did talk about the possibility of John R and of course Naomi taking my place over here at some month. For I know fully well that the comrades were told by John R and myself or was it Art that the south wanted me to go for a year but when we came back we said we did not agree to such a proposition ~~max~~ We agreed to six months and then a re-assessment. And I am positive that we have on various occasions and surely at the subsequent PC meeting talked about some other comrade than myself going--first John because of his lingual talents.

I really don't think Dick is serious in this "charge" that he flung out upon hearing some joke I made with Naomi. At anyrate why don't we find some

ocassion to raise this matter--about my return, and someone else possibly going over. For instance it could come up on the pc around a proposal that perhaps Art should come over for the Belgian and French congresses -- May 8th to May 31st. Why dont you raise it this way.

Now assuming that there is agreement that Naomi and John come over ~~be~~ I know there are problems for Naomi--job etc and it would be highly desirable that we would make a hard and firm comm tment. But I must say that in someways I think this is not good--if would be best that we were quite felxible. In more ways than one. Possibly we will need to do someth about recolonizing Montreal. Well we dont have many possibilites--variant from what I see. If Art wants to come out or we want him to come out the replacement has to be a leading comrade who knows French--can hear it and speak it. Off hand I cannot see anyone other than John R. I do not think could consider for some period even a comrade like Paul K--and Dick is ou o who have we. And maybe we are close to that . Then too we have the pr of Toronto. I gather from a note from John Naomi is thinking of wanting t work for the movement full time. These oppoortunities do not come up every I gather we are going ahead to reinforce Jeff. Well I think we all know is more than just giving Jeff a mand--being a helper. We really need some one who can not only work with Jeff on the terms that he sets which are by no means easy but we need someone wapable of taking initiatives. Naomi has all these qualities and more and in my opinion it would not only be a big step forward for us but also a big opportunity for Namoi. I would that it would be very good if Naomi could now kick free of requiring to conform to the elmployment requirements imposed by the Toronto b of e. Making her available both for the Crecent operation and or Europe.

If we are worried about the financing of such an operation as J and coming over and the usefulness of it there is something we should do now. It would be good to write Sheila to ~~examinate~~ ask her about the legal angles of a Canadian coming to Begium and taking a job--if only a part time one here for a few months. This would solve the financial and in thi way along would justify being here---say get a half time job or a job for say two of the 6 months and then do other things. For instance it would be very good if Naomi was not only able to do many things with John here went to conferences, seducational seminars etc which you would be suprise takes some time but that she did some serious reading, really became proficient in French by studying this and wrote for our or the US press --followed women's lib who kn one here outside of England so far really knows or cares much about.

~~xxxxxxx~~ I see all kinds of worthwhile things that Naomi could do ~~both personally~~ both personally satisfying and political valuable. That is if things were to stay more or less on the plane that they are. Of course th could rapidly change. For instance what with developments now taking pla in Argentina around the Comatiente group we can have a real cleavage in the international. From Peter C's report this group is nothing but a pure and simple terrorist group. It is not a matter of the application of guerr warfare, either urban or rural...we are dealing with an ultra leftist terrorist movement. According to Peter we have right now in Bolivia a situation of dual power with runidemantary organizations of a soviet type...which the majority forces are completely ignoring and waiting until they are brushed aside a decivie defeat is dealt and then we go into rura guerrilla wrfare. This causes us to seriously consider our attitudes in the next immediate p period. It means not so much coexistence in the FI but war. This will have to be discussed. So

So as you can see there are several different fariants. because in p therecare several different difficul t situations arising before us

But I think that at this time the atmosphere should be adjusted in some way if it is not already so that we have the possibility of John and Naomi coming to Europe if and when we consider it desirable. We cannot leave the situation as it would seem Dick sees it---that it is absolutely positively excluded that John and Naomi come to Europe.

Now of course I am quite prepared to go the the south and tell them that we are not intending to replace me, We are prepared to do that. At this stage of things I do not think we are required to say that oh yes we are able to let Ross go--but not John. I think that I can do what John has been doing, including working with Dick on a good basis. We might well decide to send no one---for instance if Art has to come out of Montreal for I don't think should that become necessary that Art could take John's place in Toronto.

What do you think of this.

Incidently I had hoped after this weekend to be able to tell you an opinion on how we should deal with the assignment for the world congress ---both the money and the number of delegates. Key to my proposal would have been a discussion with Joe or Jack on their line. I know they are not satisfied but I do not know exactly the basis for that and just what is involved. So in my opinion we should just continue to say nothing--neither accept or reject.

I was disappointed that Gisela never got anything from Canada. Have you made a decision that we are giving nothing but the formal dues and the congress assessment whatever it may be. You should let me know. I suggested really just a token amount and no regular commitment at this time. What are you thinking.

I have a feeling that there are a whole host of little details that are outstanding between us--for instance the name and address of that comrade who we recruited in Kitchener-Waterloo and who came back over here to Hamilton. I am also particularly anxious to know about one or two matters---for instance what we are doing about the investigation on the War Measures Act investigation. And what we are doing about the Ottawa situation. I hope we are trying to practice preventative medicine.

I hope that you will publish some of those various smaller items that I sent in the next issue of our paper. Joe wrote that he was glad to get them and intends to publish them over a period conceding that some of them will get outdated and have to be dumped. I got the March 22 issue and there is not one and it is obvious that he is not giving them to the Militant. I thought some of them were quite interesting--for instance the Russian art exhibition

I intend to make an evaluation of the fight against the Industrial Disputes Act in a few days. What with the U.S. meeting this weekend it has lost its news character and will have to be more along the lines of an evaluation. This is regrettable as it tends to more obviously and directly pit me against the British evaluation. However, The next couple of days I am going to be tied up with business arising out of the weekend meeting, then I am off to Italy for a trade union seminar via Paris and back

Incidently the British presented their opposition to the article we carried attacking the Mole's line on Quebec. I turned the whole thing around and gave them shit

----5

for consciously cutting across their line. They pulled back. They didn't know what they wanted after it was clear that they were never going to get any apology. It was finally left with my saying that we were more than agreeable to circulating through our membership a statement that they might like to draw up on the whole question. A and C don't think we will get the statement but I think we will. At anyrate I am looking forward to it. I think that this is just the issue we want to open up on with the majority.... terrorism---that is what they mean by armed struggle. They may send you a copy and not me, I think that we should seriously consider who should answer it and how. I want to be in on that for as I suggest it has world wide implications

I will be sending you a detailed report on the last weekend U.S. meeting. --but possibly not for about a week from the date you receive this. We have been hit with an unfortunate accident. Connie and Al came over but they were unable to bring the books and pamphlets that I sent over to them about a month before the British postal strike for the simple reason that they have not yet arrived at their place. Had a very profitable discussion on the line of the tendency and their documentation for the coming IMG conference.

As you probably know the youth comrades should be talking in terms already of where who is going --to what campus for next fall. It would be very valuable if some young comrade already made the moves to come to a British campus--you will recall we had hoped Harry K could come over but it was not possible. I have raised this with Peter C so that they will discuss this seriously in the south. The tendency is really isolated from the youth in the IMG-Spartacus. You should raise this matter to the Toronto organizer and the youth executive secretary.

You won't forget to let all concerned know about the big date changes on the various congresses

comradely

So where do I stand on Montreal. If you have good and substantial basis for fusing the youth paper with Jeune Garde I see no principle involved. I do not see how we can "withdraw" the minority from the youth. And of course I am opposed to any concept of liquidation of the youth LJS. Good to see that the Chartrand affair goes so well. Astonished that Winnipeg had 3,000 ~~withdrawing~~ even with St Boniface. What does it mean. I hope someone will tell Carol O to drop me a line re Prairie developments.