

GREETINGS OF ROSS DOWSON TO CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP [BRITAIN] (June 19-20, 1971)

It is both a pleasure and an honour to be able to extend the warmest greetings of the League for Socialist Action/La Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière and the Young Socialists/Ligue des Jeunes Socialistes, (the LJS being) the revolutionary socialist youth movement, independent of but in political solidarity with the LSA/LSO, Canadian section of the Fourth International, to this congress of the International Marxist Group, British section of the Fourth International.

By rights this greeting should be delivered by and in the spirit of a revolutionist considerably younger than myself and by a woman – because that is where the most profound radicalisation is taking place in Canada and that is who is fusing itself to, “taking over” the Trotskyist movement which this year is celebrating 50 years of unbroken struggle to build the revolutionary vanguard proletarian party in Canada.

You should know that the first Trotskyist in the Americas was the Canadian Maurice Spector who continued in 1925-26 under the banner of Trotsky what he and Jack MacDonald, founding secretary of the Canadian Communist Party, commenced under the banner of Lenin in 1921 – and that the Canadian Trotskyists were one of the five groups who first answered Trotsky’s call for a new, a Fourth International.

The Canadian Trotskyists are playing the leading role in Bolshevizing the radicalization that Canada’s youth, like their contemporaries across the globe, are undergoing. The Canadian Trotskyists are already in a highly favorable position to establish a continuing leadership of this radicalization process. We have contestants of course: the Stalinists, the Maoists, even a few Healyites, but on the youth arena we already have established our hegemony over the left.

The youth radicalization has already moved into the New Democratic Party – Canada’s labor party firmly based on the industrial unions, and through our continuing work in this party over the years we are in contact with those layers of the industrial working class who are becoming radicalized. Massive unemployment is forcing graduate students (and dropouts), a large proportion of them of working class origin and with whom we have been in contact on the campus, into basic industry.

The Communist Party of Canada, the most Stalinized CP this side of Albania, in a recent evaluation of the new radicalization, while attempting to designate us as ultra-leftists, noted that the Trotskyists are the most dangerous, the best organized, with the most initiative and the most flexible of all the radical currents – outside themselves of course.

We Canadian Trotskyists feel a particularly strong affinity for the International Marxist Group and the Spartacus League. A number of English working class men and women in the IMG have had a Canadian experience – under the direction of the International – for some period they played an important role in preparing the grounds for the IMG. The whole Canadian working class development has to some considerable degree gone along “English” lines. I myself, ever since participating in the reunification process of our world movement when I had an opportunity to get a bit of a feel of the British scene, have sustained an ongoing interest in Britain – for it has seemed to me that the British working class are perhaps the most class conscious working class in the entire world, with the highest feeling of their class solidarity and class power, and that the English socialist revolution is not only high on the agenda of the revolution in the advanced sectors of the capitalist world but is possibly the top one on that agenda.

This affinity and interest has been to some degree a mutual one. The Red Mole recently had occasion to comment at length on developments in Quebec to which we made a modest rejoinder. Comrade Tariq also had an opportunity to appear on an extensive TV interview broadcast from the Maritimes to B.C. which we have NOT commented upon. Your leading body took exception to our rejoinder on Quebec and some months ago requested that we open up a discussion among our members. We immediately agreed and I must say we in Canada are all very much looking forward to this discussion.

The last four months that I have been in Europe has been a big experience for me and I hope through me, for the Canadian Trotskyists particularly those experiences that I gained from attending the Turin trade union conference and the various congresses of European sections – including the German, Belgian and French movements, and hearing of their work, their achievements, and their problems – at first hand. Perhaps the most impressive and the most memorable experience was the recent action that our French comrades carried out in honor of the Paris Commune – where I saw some 20- to 25,000 people march under the banner of the Fourth International.

It is within that framework that I would like to make a few comments about some problems confronting the Fourth International, facing all of us who want to build on the current radicalization process. World imperialism, with the incredible cynical aid of the Chinese and Soviet bureaucratic castes, has struck a sharp blow at us where we have long had every reason to hope for a breakthrough. I refer to Ceylon where apparently we missed the youth radicalization as it was expressed in that strategically situated island. The struggle we now see unfolding before us under the banner of Bengla Desh which places such a challenge to the as yet relatively weak Trotskyist forces in that area, points up the fact of the profoundly explosive situations across the globe which finds us without any substantial cadre, and sometimes none in area after area. Then too there is the situation that is over-ripe through the bankruptcy of the traditional parties of labor which is providing fertile grounds for a rebirth of fascism, as in Italy where we have all too limited cadre.

We also have to recognize in many of the areas, where Trotskyism has some tradition, where enthusiasm for the Fourth International is highest, as in France and here in Britain, we are faced with strong contestants for the banner of the Fourth, by considerable forces that call themselves Trotskyist and who are not only outside of our ranks but are waging an implacable war against us.

The fact of the matter is that in the face of the heightened interest in Trotskyism by increasing numbers of youth who have been deprived of the necessary experience to build a Leninist party, we are seriously lacking in resources; we are without the necessary means to put out publications on the frequency and scope that is desirable, to set up headquarters and to take on staff. The crisis of mankind as Trotsky said some years back is reduced to a crisis of leadership. At this stage it is a crisis of revolutionary cadre, trained and experienced in the problems of the class struggle and the proletarian revolution. (In this respect I was very much struck by the honest self criticism that our comrades of the Ligue Communiste made of their press Rouge.)

For the first time in several generations the material to build such a cadre is coming into the arena and towards the Fourth International. There is no strategy that can substitute for the process of educating and training this cadre. An essential component of that process is the discussion that appeared on the eve of the last World Congress over Latin America and has proven to have far vaster ramifications than most of us thought at the time. There has developed a certain impatience within our ranks with the process of debate and discussion – reflected in various ways within our movement. We don't see this debate or discussion in any way interfering with the work of the movement but as an inevitable part of the process of preparing the cadre. It is only through the combination of revolutionary practice and theoretical discussion – each one reinforcing the other – that genuine Trotskyist forces will be forged.

With great satisfaction we Canadian Trotskyists have noted the numerical growth of the genuine forces of British Trotskyism. We are looking forward to this Congress to mark a further stride forward along the road to the British socialist revolution.

Long live the International Marxist Group
Long live the Spartacus League
Long live the unity of the Fourth International