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TO MEMBERS OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE

Dear Comrades,

Attached for your information is a rough translation of an article by Comrade Bensaid, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist League of France, which appeared in the June 10 issue of Rouge.

Comradely,

Barry Sheppard

TERRORISM AND REVOLUTION

After the Attempt at Lod and the Arrest of Andréas Baader

Le Monde of May 26 entitled its editorial, "Bombs in Europe." Since then, the attempt on the airport at Lod, the arrest of Andréas Baader in Germany, one of the principal leaders of the Red Army Fraction, has occupied a select place in current events. The bourgeois press and the press of the reformist workers' movement yelp in unison and denounce the spectator of terrorism. The method is easy. Through the classic procedure of the amalgam, it permits them to get around the fundamental problem of revolutionary violence, which is posed with new acuteness at the moment when imperialist genocide is unleashed over Vietnam, when torture is systematized by the government in Brazil, and where even the French bourgeoisie begins to arm its killers of the SAC and CDR.

The Banditry of Yesterday and Today

Minority, even solitary, action cannot be judged outside its social context. In a small book, recently published by Maspéro, Hobsbawn set forth the essential characteristics of social agrarian banditry. Honored bandits of peasant origin expresses profound popular resistance to the developments of feudalism, then to the penetration of capitalism in the countryside. Representatives of a small peasantry, incapable of smashing the system which strangles them, these bandits are condemned to a certain solitariness. Their action is a desperate protest. The masses can recognize that in it, as is attested to by the success that their popular literature accords to Robin Hood as well as the haidoucs of Roumania, sketched by Panait Istrati. But they cannot directly participate in it.

On the other hand, it is not unusual to see bandits take a place in the revolutionary struggle when the proletariat comes to the head of a national or social struggle of emancipation. During the long march, Mao Tse-tung attracted and reeducated a certain number of them. In Russia, the collaboration between the Bolsheviks and the illegal groups of the Caucuses in the big expropriations from 1905 to 1914 is well-known. This is also true for the participation of the celebrated bandits of Aurès in the Algerian revolution and the role played by Pancho Villa in the Mexican revolution.

The working class has not expressed its resistance to capitalism in the form of an urban banditry, analogous to agrarian banditry. If a certain sort of anarchism, that of the band at Bonnot, appears to be lodged in this tradition, it is also on the whole lodged in a political current which rather expresses a confrontation with the existing social order: the project of its destruction, even if this project borders on utopia. Rather than a workers' banditry, ascending capitalism developed gangsterism in the cities, which, far from challenging capitalist society, is installed in its midst, the better to nourish it. Agrarian banditry constitutes resistance to oppression; gangsterism is only a form of parasitism on capital, without popular

sympathy.

What is emerging today, beyond the limited case of the Baader band, is a new form of social confrontation which already in part constitutes an international phenomenon. A series of social sections, made up of technicians, intellectuals and students, find themselves on the warpath on the line of division between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The workers' movements, dominated by Stalinist or social-democratic reformism, cannot permit them to express their radical break with the decaying society, with its hypocritical values and its legalized violence. This makes up a part of the despair which has developed into urban terrorism. The groups which embark on this type of action constitute microsocieties, living apart from official society, justifying their action by a revolutionary project which they do not have the forces to bring to realization for lack of real connections with the masses. The only link is that of exemplary action and not organized resistance to capitalist exploitation.

If it's genuine, the document of the Tupamaros (MLN) published by the Uruguayan police confirms this hypothesis. "The MLN remains a subversive but non-revolutionary organization," declared this document of self-criticism. In other words, what is involved is a movement of violent confrontation, assured of broad sympathy in the masses, but up to now incapable of organizing them for a decisive assault upon the bourgeois state power.

So far as we're concerned it's clear that instead of plunging into terrorism, the role of revolutionaries is first of all to show the responsibilities of capitalist society for its legal and organized violence, as well as the responsibility of a workers' movement which capitulates before its historical tasks.

Minority Violence and Mass Violence

But the problem does not stop there. If the denunciation of terrorism takes so prominent a place in the bourgeois press, that's because the minority violence of some groups demonstrates the vulnerability of a system that wants to be faultless. The workers give a daily example: by showing that a strike-stoppage in a workshop can paralyze a highly automatized factory. The Vietnamese give a like example on a very different scale by holding at bay the most formidable apparatus of destruction equipped by guidance mechanisms, giant bombers, electronic apparatuses. Skyjackings of airplanes also contribute to demonstrate that the more the capitalist system is centralized, organized and automatized, the more it is at the mercy of a grain of sand.

For revolutionaries, the problem that the action that the Baader band poses is not one for moralizing judgment, but rather that of the bonds which can be established between mass violence and minority violence. A first and particularly enlightening example is given us by factory struggles. It is clear that the

occupation of a factory which mobilizes a mass of workers to control the means of production and eventually passes over to active administration has a far greater significance than the kidnapping of a supervisor or a boss. The occupation attacks the boss' power at its roots, the ownership of the means of production. Kidnapping only attacks the physical person of an easily-replaceable oppressor. But if the kidnapping expresses a genuine anger, if it is not presented as an end in itself, a pure revolt, but rather as a means of breaking up a passivity and resignation of the masses by beginning to overthrow its hierarchical idols, then kidnapping can be a correct initiative that the workers ought to defend and even, in certain cases, to promote.

One of the latest actions attributed by the police to the Baader band is an explosion of a bomb in the barracks of the American forces in Europe where three American soldiers were found dead. The question is not one of principle but of tactics. So far as we're concerned, we have not hesitated to resort to violent minority actions when the actions were tied up with mass activity. In December 1970, the Communist League supported, at the moment of the Burgos verdict, the attack of a group of militants against the Bank of Spain, but that was parallel with the mass campaign led on behalf of the Basques threatened with death. We have also led actions against General Ky when he visited Paris, against the U.S. consulate, an action which led to the indictment of Alain Krivine, and supported the action led by militants against the firms profiting from the U.S. war. But this was parallel with a systematic mass work within the framework of the FSI in particular on behalf of the Indochinese revolution. We have taken responsibility for the direct attack against the meeting of the New Order, March 9, 1971, at the Sports Palace, physically imposed our presence upon the hirelings of the CFT at Rennes, and uncovered the anti-crisis plans of the Minister of the Interior. But that was parallel with a campaign of systematic propaganda against the armed gangs of capital, particularly in the trade unions where we are active, particularly through the army committees created in 1970 for the defense of the drafted imprisoned soldiers.

As for ourselves, revolutionaries ought not to await the insurgence of the masses to oppose their own violence to the daily violence of capital. In strikes, we propose to workers who have learned from the assassinations of Overney, and Labroche, threatened by the CRS, to organize workers self-defense. To prove it's possibility, we gave an example to the extent of our capabilities. In the same way, our Spanish comrades of the Revolutionary Communist League have popularized the idea of workers self-defense but from the beginning tied it up to assure themselves the protection of mass demonstrations as they did the first of May at Madrid with chains and Molotov cocktails.

We do not think that the way chosen by Baader and his comrades is one that leads to revolution. But we understand that they can think so, hard-pressed by the unleashing of imperialist violence and made desperate by the inertia of the reformist workers movement. That is why we defend them, first of all, against their bourgeois judges, as well as against the calumnies of the frightened bureaucrats.

-- Daniel BENSARD