

June 21, 1973

To Political Committee Members

Dear Comrades,

Attached is a report written by Olga Rodriguez on 1) Aarhus, Denmark, and 2) a meeting of the European Political Bureaus held in Brussels on June 2-3.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice

Report on Aarhus and European Political Meetin in Brussels,  
June 2-3

## I. Aarhus

Dan and I were in Aarhus two days, May 29-30. Because of his work schedule, Torbin was unable to meet with us until the night before we left.

As soon as we arrived, we went to the Aarhus Headquarters, where we met Jenz and Peter, two comrades who agree with us on Latin America. Peter is working with Torbin and two other comrades from Aarhus on a contribution to the international discussion on the European resolution.

The situation is very good for us in Aarhus, according to Jenz. Only one comrade from the local (branch?) has declared for the MMF, but according to Jenz and Peter she can't defend their positions. Both Jenz and Peter felt that the majority of the Aarhus local agreed with the LTT on Latin America.

After Peter left, Jenz told us that Peter was moving to Copenhagen because of his job and that this would be good for the LTT in the discussion around international disputes in Copenhagen. Dan asked if there were any comrades in Aarhus among those who support us on Latin America who were ready to declare for the LTT. Jenz said that he, Torbin and Peter were pretty much ready to declare at this time. We wanted to know if this would alienate Praebin, the central leader of the branch, from declaring, but Jenz thought it wouldn't and said that Praebin supports us, but is just a little slow on matters such as these -- that is that Praebin is a little more deliberate and wants to make sure that he is doing the right thing for the organization. Dan later spoke to Praebin about this and Praebin said that although he was not ready yet to declare for the LTT and supported us on Latin America, that he thought it would be good for those comrades who wanted to declare to do so.

Thursday night, May 30, Dan spoke to a meeting that had been arranged for the membership to ask what ever questions they had about the LTT, there were about a dozen or so comrades present, as a number of the comrades were studying for exams or on holiday. There was an older comrade there -- about 65 or so -- named Paul. He had been a member of the section since before 1953. Paul had just finished translating or helping to translate the "Sabado-Enero" report into Danish.

The meeting, which lasted about 3½ hours, concentrated on questions around the SWP and our work in the Women's liberation and anti-war movements. The questions were around the single-issue aspect of them and the kinds of demands that were raised. This gave us an opportunity to talk about the method of the Transitional Program and the European anti-war movement, Susan L. had just arrived from Copenhagen and was able to give the comrades an idea about the possibilities for women's liberation work in Europe, as well as give comrades a very good idea of how we arrived at our decision to participate in the Abortionlaw repeal campaign. The comrades in Aarhus were interested in the opportunities for women's liberation work in Europe as they had gone through an experience with a local Socialist Women's group and were very negative about the experience.

The discussion was pretty good. The comrades' questions were not hostile at all and appeared to be the result of rumors and questions posed to them by the MMFers in Copenhagen. Torbin and Praebin were not present for the whole meeting as they had prior meetings or work.

Dan did speak with Torbin when he arrived and he said that he would declare and try to get others to as well. Both Torbin and Jenz, who want to declare, will be sending in a letter to the LTT and informing the leadership in Copenhagen

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about their support to the ITT and both agreed to come to and to try to get others from Aarhus to come to the Belgium conference.

The comrades are also translating the Transitional Program into Danish, which will be very good.

## II. EUROPEAN POLITICAL BUREAU MEETING, June 2-3

The two-day meeting that took place in Brussels at the Belgian section's head quarters was around trade union work in Europe.

There were around 40 comrades present from Italy, France, Belgium, Austria, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Holland, a comrade from En Marcha in Spain (although it was not clear he was from Spain or France), and three comrades who came only on Sunday who were from Greece, England.

Among these comrades were Livio, Vergeat, Sterne, Ben Said, Pat Jordan, Tony Roberts and Alan H. from the Tendency, Eddy Labeau, and Hervart.

The agenda for the two days was to be: (1) General perspectives in Trade Union work, by Livio; (2) Supplementary reports on T.U. work from France, Belgium, and Italy; (3) Solidarity work in present situation, in Trade Unions; (4) Immigrant workers work; (5) Balance sheet on Milan; (6) WFDY conference in E. Berlin.

The only points that were covered during the two-day meeting were points 1, 2, 4, and 6. Pierre Frank was there only for Livio's report and left as soon as Livio finished giving it.

1. The first point on the agenda was a report by Livio on perspectives for worker's work. Livio's report was based on a preparatory text that all the comrades were supposed to have read before the meeting. The comrade from Sweden complained that his was illegible, and it appeared that many others had not read the report. In addition to this text by Livio, the comrades were supposed to have received a supplement, which nobody had, except for the French-speaking comrades.

Livio's report, and the text, as he said, were based on the European Perspectives document for the upcoming world congress. The text and report concentrated on the question of worker's control and building "organs of proletarian democracy". His report said that the question of worker's control is on the agenda for mobilization and agitation. He also said that "organs of Proletarian" democracy had a specific role to play that couldn't be played by the Trade Unions, even where the T.U.s had revolutionary leaderships. (This may sound a little disjointed and hard to understand, but these are Dan's notes, and Livio never made clear what his definition of workers control or organs of proletarian democracy were. Needless to say a number of other comrades were as confused as we were.)

According to Livio, these organs of workers democracy are not strike committees, although strike committees are a possible first step to workers democracy. He stated that the coordination of workers democracy-- the organs -- was very important and that there are different methods of organizing cadres of workers control in this new period than in other periods. That today the struggle is against the centrist tendencies.

That the centrism of the 1950's is dead and today there are new forms of centrism. That the pressure on Maoism is against ultraleftism and towards centrism.

And that when he is speaking of centrism, he is not speaking of something in the Extreme left -- that the extreme left is an anti-centrist force.

He then read from the supplement to his preparatory text, which contained the forms of intervention into the workers movement. These forms are, according to Livio, propaganda, cells, and trade union tendencies. He said that intervention into structures of proletarian democracy is not concretely posed at this time because factory cells haven't been organized everywhere and nowhere do we have primitive accumulation of cadres. So the forms of intervention could be around (1) propaganda -- factory bulletins, etc., and (2) factory cells.

He said that the section on workers self-defence was not in his preparatory text, but that comrades should propagandize around workers self-defence.

Following Livio's report there were three supplementary reports on the situation in the workers movement in France, Belgium and Italy. All three of these reports were around what activities of "workers control" were going on in these countries.

The comrade in Belgium talked about the strike committees that were set up around the 1970 iron workers strike. He said that the committees did not disappear right away after the strike. That in the recent period, some strikes have ~~led to~~ led to factory occupations. That the Belgian comrades organized solidarity actions around the March 1973 Caterpillar (Caterpillar tractors, etc) strike. His report of what has been going on in Belgium around the recent strikes appeared to be a fight for better conditions and trade union control of these conditions.

*a report*

Comrade Fidelio from Italy spoke about the high level of workers control activity in Italy at this time. That at this time the demand for a sliding scale of wages is very popular and the demand for equal pay increases as well..

Demand for workers control of the cost of living index rejected by everyone but ourselves and that even some of our Italian comrades have questioned fighting for this. What the extreme left is pushing for is a guaranteed wage. Our comrades think that this is very bad. Also, the extreme left is bad on the question of unemployment because they don't fight unemployment, but merely want to subsidize it. That the main slogans of our Italian section in the trade unions is for 36-hours and cost-of-living under workers control.

*work with*

Fidelio went over the workers councils that were formed in 1969 in Italy. He said that most of these councils were built after the struggle by the trade union bureaucracy. That there are two types of workers councils, ~~one~~ that revolutionists can work in both types to fight against the bureaucracy. But that these workers councils lose their power after a while to the executives and bureaucrats of the trade unions.

The French comrade, who none of us knew, pointed out that the ~~number~~ number of strikes in France haven't increased, but the form of struggle is changing. That in the recent strikes, there has been a self-organization of the struggle -- strike committees. He spent a lot of his time attacking the Belgium section's pamphlet on workers control (which the Belgian comrades say was written by someone in Chalier's group that left the section). The French comrade said that workers control doesn't proceed step by ~~step~~ step. That the abolition of the trade union

bureaucracy was not workers control, but that strike committees and trade union democracy must be coupled with workers control.

The discussion that followed Livio's, and the supplementary reports was a little confusing. Two of the comrades from the IMG who were present, Brian Heron and Jennings said that rank and file organizations are very advanced in England -- the shop-stewards committees. That workers control is not so important in England because it won't lead to "dual power". That the disc. reflected two mistakes (1) that everything the workers do is not workers control and (2) workers control does not equal workers democracy. They pointed out the need for a strict definition of workers control. That in Britain, the problem is not workers control, but the need for a general strike.

There was quite a lot of disagreement with the two English comrades who said this. Comrades pointed out that there were shop stewards committees in Europe as well, but that these were not necessarily an indication that there was self-organization of the workers and that workers control wasn't needed.

The comrade from Sweden, Gote, pointed out that Livio's report or text would be very hard to apply to Sweden because the trade unions are so integrated into the state there. This was attacked by comrades Jebrac, Anna (Switz.) and another Swiss comrade. They took these remarks to mean that our comrades would not work in the trade unions in Sweden. Livio ~~also~~ also dealt with the Swedish comrade in his summary. This led ~~to~~ to the Swedish comrade's pointing out that in Livio's text he had said that what the sections had to do in trade union work was to neutralize the unions, and the Swedish comrade wanted to know whether or not Comrade Livio meant that the trade Unions wouldn't play a revolutionary role.

Jebrac said that the Swedish comrades ideas on trade union work could lead them to making the same mistake that the French comrades made -- building red unions. He pointed out that now our French comrades put out 220 factory bulletins (Taupe Rouge) and that the Ligue Comm. had 20 delegates at the national CFDT conf. that was taking place at the same time as the political bureau meeting. They also had 20 sympathizers who were delegates to the CFDT conv.

In his summary, Livio took up the question that Herwart raised about the preparatory text and the report being too abstract about what the sections have to begin to do re. trade union work. He said that the document, like the European resolution, lays out generally what has to be done. During the discussion, Eddy Labeau from Ghent had raised the need for building the party, having a system of demands on which to intervene in the trade unions -- the need for a program for intervention into the trade unions. He had asked Livio to clarify what he meant by organs of proletarian democracy and workers control, pointing out that organs of proletarian democracy only spring up in a period of intensive mobilization of the working class, or they are simply artificial, easily co-opted and could become an obstacle to building the party. Livio didn't really take this question up as it was posed by Eddy, but did spend time lecturing to Eddy that of course, organs of prole. democ. only arose during a period of pre-revolutionary situation or revolutionary situation. He said that workers control as a demand now is only propaganda until there is a revolutionary situation.

2. Vergeat made an announcement of the upcoming WFDY Conf. ~~coming up soon~~ in East Berlin and urged the sections in Europe to send several comrades to it for a propaganda intervention -- sales of press, leaflet distribution, etc.

3. Anna from Switzerland gave the report on Immigrant workers. She pointed out that this was not dealt with in the European Persp. Doc., but it was very important where our trade union work was concerned in Europe because there are some 11 million immigrant workers in the western European countries and that it is a task of the F.I to confront this problem. She gave a run down of some of the work that they *do* now in Switzerland. She pointed out several problems that they face in doing work among the immigrant workers:

(1) How to relate the problem of immigrant workers to the unity of the working class -- to break down the divisions that exist between the immigrant and native workers. (2) The necessity to intervene on the specific questions of concern to the immigrant workers -- like living conditions, educational opportunities, or lack thereof, etc. and (3) The questions related to building the sections of other Western European countries through recruitment of people to the movement in the "welcoming countries" from these other countries of their origin. This of course would also help in the building of sections in the colonial or semi-colonial countries where the immigrant workers are from these countries.

She pointed out the need for very close collaboration between the sections of the welcoming countries and the countries of origin. -- this was specifically in the context of her report on the Spanish and Italian workers in Switz.

The discussion of this included some area reports from France and from Germany. The French comrade pointed out that the immigrant workers in France are from No. Africa and other African countries. She said that their problems are very intense-- they are forced to have work permits and papers to stay in France, and that many, if not most, do not have these papers. That the police repression is very great on the immigrant workers and that they represent some 80% of the semi-skilled and unskilled workers. She pointed to the role that they had played in recent strikes. They are forced to live in slums or ghettos. That the French C.P.s position toward them is "nationalistic and paternalistic," and the C.P. favors more controls on the part of the state on the immigration of the No. Africans and other African immigrant workers. They are for limiting immigration. She pointed out that since May '68 there has been a rise in the combativity of these immigrant workers in France. They have held a number of rent strikes, and are fighting the immigration laws. The French comrades favor no restrictive immigration laws. They think that the borders of France should be open. The problem with doing the work needed among the immigrant workers is that many of them have a "low culture" and are illiterate -- I assume that the comrade meant that there are many cultural differences and that many of these workers don't speak French. She pointed to the need to have language classes for these workers.

Hers was about the only interesting remarks made under this report, although Herwart from Germany gave some remarks on what kind of immigrant workers live in Germany. It was unclear from the report or the remarks made under it just how much work is being done in this area.

After this report, Vergeat made a few closing remarks. He said that the document that was submitted by Livio and his report would be re-drafted for the European sections for discussion in the sections. That the European document (On Building Rev. Parties in Cap. Europe) had some obvious weaknesses on workers control--that the section on workers control was lacking and that some amendments would have to be made on Ireland, women's liberation work, and workers control. Pointed to the need for political centralization of work in Europe and the need to translate not only world congress discussion articles, but also special articles and reports on work in the different sections in Europe so the comrades in Europe can all have an idea about the work that other comrades are doing and be able to learn from them.

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Vergeat said that the next meeting would be in Sept. some time, but that they would inform the comrades before of the exact date. The points that he thought should be take up at that meeting are (1) Solidarity work in the unions; (2) Political student work -- what happened in Belgium and France with student upsurges; (3) Army work and Jebrac added (4) the common market.

We did get an opportunity to talk to some of the comrades during the breaks. Eddy L. said that he would be willing to help on arrangements for the conference. He also mentioned that there were other comrades in Belgium who agreed with him. He appears to have a great deal of authority with the comrades from Ghent. They seem to have a lot of respect for him and it appears to us he will be able to convince some people there of our position on Latin America.

I hope that the report is clear, but this is the best that I could do with the notes we took and the way the reports at the meeting were given.

Comradely,

*Olga*  
Olga