

JAN 16 1979

xs:PC

Paris, Jan. 7, 1979

New York

Dear Comrades,

This is a report is to give some information for comrades there on the situation of the pre-congress discussion taking place in the French LCR (the congress is at the end of January).

First some history. Last May or so, the United Secretariat Bureau had several discussions with delegations from the LCR Political Bureau concerning the relationship of the LCR to the International center and specifically the need for them to bring back into the French leadership several French comrades who had been working for the International a very long time (for example, Michaloux, Rousset, Jean-Pierre) and replace them with other comrades from their leadership. This led to discussions, mostly informal, on the general problems of the French section in face of their coming congress and in particular the problem that the section has been divided into semipermanent faction-like formations for the past five years.

In the end, the LCR leadership requested that two comrades of the Bureau--it was Charles and Charles-André) be made available to work with the French leadership (in a new way that would try to cut across the permanent factionalism and build a new, broader majority in the organization based on a political evolution that had begun to take place during the course of the 1977-78 legislative election campaign. *to prepare their Congress*)

The two Charleses took part in a commission of the LCR central committee that was open to people from all currents in the organization. They worked long hours to hammer out a resolution, commonly referred to as "the theses." The axes of it is not proletarianization, although here and there it talks about the need to "stubbornly implant ourselves in the industrial working class." The main axis is the need to build a Trotskyist party with a stable leadership and the need to orient our work to winning the ranks of the mass workers parties and the trade unions. It says the LCR is the nucleus of the revolutionary party (which is controversial in the LCR!). And it also argues for the right to tendency and faction (the current LCR statutes don't recognize the right to factions).

On the Union of the Left, it says: "By signing the Common Program and by aligning themselves with the Movement of the Left Radicals, a bourgeois party playing the role of a link toward more representative bourgeois formations, the CP and SP set up a class-collaborationist front: the Union of the Left was thus a counterrevolutionary response to the mass movement that developed from 1968.

"Thus the orientation of the Union of the Left was part of the continuity of the policy of class collaboration systematized by the VIIth congress of the Comintern in 1935 with the adoption of the line of popular fronts. The Union of the Left is nothing but a variant of this popular front line that was applied in 1936, in Spain and France most notably."

In September, supporters of the theses formed a tendency. Three had already been formed, so they were Tendency 4. Another tendency formed later, composed of supporters of the International Bolshevik Faction (Tendency 5).

The following are quick translations of excerpts from the statements of each of the tendencies summarizing their positions in a special column in Rouge (all except Tendency 1, which includes Nemo and other ex-LTFers--the Rouge with their contribution doesn't seem to be in our file).

Tendency 2

"Born in the LCR, a Trotskyist organization, we have taken a critical look at the "acquisitions of Trotskyism"...and have rejected them....We will limit ourselves to give here a simple enumeration of our disagreements with Trotskyism.

"--We reject the economic and political catastrophism according to which capitalism has been "in agony" (in Lenin's words) since 1914 or that the productive forces have "ceased to grow" (according to Trotsky), and that therefore the proletariat is supposedly always at the threshold of power in all countries of the world.

"--Contrary to the LCR, we don't equate the struggle for socialism solely with the elimination of private property in the means of production. It is the power of the ruling class that needs to be liquidated, whether this power is based on private property or on public property in the means of production.

"--In opposition to the inter-classist positions of our central committee, we say that the wage earners themselves are divided by social classes. More particularly, a class antagonism ~~distinction~~ opposes the proletariat (blue-collar and white-collar workers) on the one hand to the agents of capital (engineers, foremen, supervisors) who make up the wage-earning petty bourgeoisie, on the other....

"We don't think that by participating in this discussion we will have the forces to influence what will be the majority line of the LCR. The question is whether it is possible for a current that is revolutionary Marxist but not Trotskyist to ~~exist~~ have the means to exist and develop itself inside this organization. Other currents that we feel close to did not have this possibility, such as "Socialism or Barbarism" thirty years ago...."

Tendency 3

"The LCR, like all the organizations of the far left and of the workers movement, is having difficulties in the current conjuncture of post-March 1978. A new characterization of the

political situation is necessary.

"These difficulties of conjunctural reorientation are mixed in the LCR with the effects of a long organizational crisis that is linked to the fact that the transformation of the leadership and modes of functioning have not followed upon the social transformation of the organization. To try to stem these elements of crisis, and stimulated by the desire to achieve more of a convergence of the forces of Trotskyism on an international level, the United Secretariat, the [LCR] Political Bureau, and then the majority of the central committee have launched a process of "rearming" the LCR which in fact amounts to a significant change from its previous line.

"...But the direction in which the political orientation has been changed prior to the congress by the putting into practice of the draft theses of this new majority of the central committee does not in our opinion correspond to ~~this~~ ^{what is} needed.

"Present in this evolution is the risk of opportunism vis-à-vis the leaderships of the traditional organizations.

"--The need for self-organization and workers control is minimized in our policy of workers unity as it has appeared publicly over the past several months.

"--The question of unity of the workers organizations is too often reduced to unity of its political organizations, the CP and SP, while underestimating the question of unity of action and a democratic trade-union unification.

^{treated} "--The question of unity of the workers organizations is often without defining the program for this potential unity....

"The risk of sectarianism is also present in this political evolution. The risk of sectarianism vis-à-vis forms of the radicalization that cannot be reduced solely to the fightback against austerity (criticism of the family institution or ~~criticism~~ criticism of educational institutions, for example).

"The risk of sectarianism vis-à-vis movements that do not from the start see the need to ~~work~~ orient in the direction of the ranks of the traditional workers organizations....

posed by this political line

"The risk of sectarianism is confirmed in the differentiations made between relationships with the revolutionary organizations. The "unity policy" disappears, in favor of a relationship only with the OCI, even though in practice and in relation to tasks it is most often the OCT (or the CCA [Pabloists] with whom an [Maoist-leaning] agreement is reached, or even conjuncturally with certain sectors of the PSU....

"The whole "political rearming" is couched in a dogmatic conception of Trotskyism that we don't share....The present political evolution of the DCR is reviving in our ranks the idea of a "Trotskyist program" independent of historical evolution...."

Tendency 4

"In preparing the congress, the central committee of the LCR worked long hours on a draft theses proposing an orientation for the years to come, without setting a precondition for this common work that there had to as be agreement on balance sheets of the past. This draft was adopted by a broad majority at the central committee, including by comrades who were elected at the last congress on the basis of the majority orientation, but also by comrades elected ~~by~~ by one of the main opposition tendencies (the ex-T A)....

"This orientation[of the theses] tries to respond to the following question: how to overcome the contradiction between the consciousness among the masses of workers of the need for a united fight-back against the government and its austerity policy, and the divisionist, ~~policy~~ class-collaborationist policy of the reformist leaderships, which results in a strengthening of the ~~divisionist~~ differentiations inside the working class of sectors that suffer more or less severely from the effects of the crisis and of governmental measures.

"We think the results of the legislative elections of 1978 did not at all change the relationship of forces between the classes that have developed since 1968. It is the maintenance of a relationship of forces generally favorable to the working class that explains the present inability of Giscard to transform his brief electoral victory into a real stabilization of his regime and also ~~justifies~~ confirms that revolutionary marxists should continue to fight to put forward perspectives for the whole of the working class leading to a confrontation with the government.

"This means ^{we need} to explain the road to working class unity beginning from the present conditions. From this flows our policy of the united front, which is expressed in the struggle for unity of action by the whole workers movement and in particular by the traditional organizations (at the level of the workers parties, SP and CP, and the unions, CGT, CFDT, FEN, FO) that are looked to by the masses of workers as their instruments for countering the attacks of the bourgeoisie. This struggle is not an appeal for unity for unity's sake, but includes propositions for unifying demands around which unity should be built; the means for mobilizing (tactics of struggle, preparation of a general strike...); and the objective that can and must be set (kick out the government and replace it with a government of the CP and SP)....

"A united front ^{direct} tactic is even more on the order of the day because we have to ~~focus~~ our efforts toward the workers influenced by the CP and SP, which does not exclude a policy toward the workers organizations and ~~far left~~ ~~organisations~~. Not only because these parties influence the mass of the working class, but more concretely because the accumulated experience of struggle over the past ten years of a whole generation of worker militants is combined with the experience of the impasse produced by the ~~policy~~ class-collaborationist policies of the reformist leaderships

and with the penetration inside the workers movement of radicalized currents produced by the general crisis of ~~the~~ social relationships (for example the feminist (capitalist) radicalization).

*These are the underlying factors that explain the discussions and differentiations that are beginning to arise inside the traditional organizations (reflecting the real crisis of strategy that permeates the workers movement) and that can only deepen in the coming years.

"In response to this situation, it is necessary to build an organization capable of taking initiatives in the class struggle but also capable of contributing the essential programmatic responses to the strategic debates that will develop. This is why we stress the importance of the programmatic references of the Fourth International, of which we are the French section...."

Tendency 5

"Rouge will no longer be a daily in two months--a measure that had no doubt become necessary given the financial situation of the newspaper and of the LCR. Financial problems are also political: not only have we failed to win new readers, but we have lost readers over the past months, several thousand. Among them, no doubt, are many workers who did not find in Rouge or in the LCR an instrument enabling them to respond to the problems that confront them every day...."

"What have the workers found in Rouge (and, though it, in the LCR)?

"--imprecise analyses that change each day and do not respond to a key problem: who is on the offensive? The workers or the bosses?

"--tasks that are conceived as if nothing happened after the electoral defeat of the Union of the Left (the fight for a CP-SP government is always on the order of the day);

"--a policy of workers unity that is in reality a policy of division because the LCR tries to build unity around slogans that presently are not unifying (sliding scale of wages);

"--positions that do not explain what is the central problem today: the division? the "realism" of the unions? the CP-SP government?...."

"We want an LCR in which the first question addressed is: what is the obstacle standing in the way of mobilizations? An LCR that ~~measures~~ measures its policies by their results in the class struggle. A party of intervention, not a party of discussion. A party that tests the correctness of its overall programmatic options by its capacity for being, day by day, the

best defenders of the workers...."

As of December 4 (things have changed quite a bit since, but I don't know exactly how), these are the numbers of signatures of adherents to each of the tendencies:

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| T 1: 260 | T 4: 350 |
| T 2: 60 | T 5: 30 |
| T 3: 280 | |

Finally, the following are my notes on a report by Daniel Bensaid on "the state of the organization" at the Oct. 28-Nov. 1 meeting of the LCR central committee. (Bensaid, as well as Alain Krivine are in Tendency 4)

Notes:

There are two necessary elements in the pre-congress discussion. One is a reorientation flowing from political developments. Second is to confront the general problem of constructing the organization and overcoming the permanent instability in the LCR. There are two reasons for this constant problem of instability of the organization: one stemming from the history of the LCR; the other stemming from the history of the Fourth International since the 1969 world congress.

The LCR suffered from a lack of continuity in human cadres. The change of leadership between the old PCI and the LCR was about 90 percent. There was a political discontinuity too. Adherence to the FI was done more from a feeling of the need for a return to Leninism in general than on the principles of the FI.

When we dumped entrism, we threw out a lot of the history of the FI with it. We rejected the general party-building perspective and some of the programmatic base. Our big weakness was on questions of workers control, governmental formula, trade union work, fractions (or was it factions?), and the question of a left trade union tendency.

Entrism was seen as implying a certain kind of party-building. When we dumped this version of party-building, we didn't substitute anything for it. We didn't think of the party as the revolutionary nucleus that should implant itself in the plants and lead struggles.

Our perspective was to achieve a fusion with the masses in the midst of a revolutionary crisis. We searched for a mediation to build a party; one such mediation was gaining hegemony in the new mass vanguard.

In the International since 1969 there was a misestimation of the rhythm of the mass upsurge and a search for shortcuts, such as guerrilla warfare. The 1974 European resolution was too objectivist; it didn't see the impact of the reformists and need to oppose them.

This had very heavy consequences between 1968 and 1972. We saw the need to build not only on program but to build an organizational force; but we tried to do this through using the radicalization in a tactical way, as an organizational striking force. We expressed this in various ways, such as "from the periphery to the center," etc.

The signing of the Common Program of the Union of the Left posed the overall political questions and provoked our crisis, which still continues today. Unprepared for the Union of the Left, we fell into new mistakes. We thought the battle for the masses could go through voting for the Union of the Left.

Then came our turn toward mass work. But we had no central political leadership. We established our line empirically, after experience in an intervention. The lack of homogeneity of a common political line led to distrust in the organization. The national leadership, by leading through tactics, tried to be too rigid in imposing democratic centralism. There was no common political vision.

Our lack of a line led to timidity in recruitment.

In our debate over propaganda and agitation, we divorced the two things. We thought propaganda corresponded to the newspaper, and agitation to mass work. When faced by the Union of the Left, we responded by publishing our Manifesto--that is, retreating to our general ideological tradition and avoiding the immediate political problem. This was a problem in all our election campaigns--we had no immediate political axes to put forward our identity.

Problems of sectorialism and the objective problem of the daily. The leadership functioned around the paper.

[2 years ago]

The Second Congress was the climax. The lack of leadership in the organization led to distorted expressions of the comrades wanting leadership. The work groups looked to their mass work for some answer. At the congress we tried to say we had the kind of leadership we had because of the level of the class struggle. We had no idea of the need for conscious attention to building a leadership.

The Russian Revolution showed what role a party can play when it has a political cadre with confidence in its leadership. Russia was different in this from Germany after the first world war. In Germany there was a revolutionary crisis and the party had a general revolutionary program, but it had a discontinuity of leadership. No common political line. They were not clear on the fundamental difference of strategy from the social democracy.

The failure of the Union of the Left imposed the debate on how to win the masses of CP and SP workers, based on their own experience, and to build a solid organization.

We are on the edge of a knife. There are good opportunities facing us. We can base ourselves on a common experience to go forward and build a leadership. The leadership we need means professionalism, collective functioning, and the integration of workers work into the central leadership. The concept we had in 1968, of sending students to factory gates, was wrong.

The daily was not conceived to build the organization. Now it threatens to break the organization, and our apparatus.

Our method of debate has been tactician. When differences arose on tactics, we systematized them. Permanent tendencies-factions grew up.

The 1974 European resolution said there were three different tactics for building the organization: 1) organic growth, 2) entrism, and 3) winning hegemony in the vanguard. All three can be used to build an organization. But our problem was we weren't stressing the building of the organization. In saying this I'm not saying we want to return to the old concept of simply individual recruitment and propaganda.

We have made mistakes and have made corrections. But we have not made big mistakes on things like the colonial revolution, the political revolution, or big revolutionary upsurges. We can lead a fight to overcome the crisis and rearm the organization.

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[Just remember that these are just notes from a fast-speaking French speaker, so don't quote this anywhere.]

Comradely,

Caroline

Caroline

JAN 20 1979

XS: PC

Paris, Jan. 15, 1979

New York

Dear Comrades,

To round off the information on France that I sent a few days ago, here is a translation of excerpts from Tendency One's position (Nemo et al), as published in the pre-congress discussion column in Rouge.

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If we are to believe Rouge, an extraordinary event took place at the 40th congress of the CGT: the leadership of the most important union federation is supposed to have made a sudden turn by making a "democratic overture" and by becoming the champion of "unity proposals." The reality is quite different....

Since the policy of the apparatuses is to place the unions squarely behind the anti-working-class measures, what Séguy [head of CGT] proposes is obvious: it is "unity" of the apparatuses to carry out "days of action" [that is, routine, impotent protests] and "unity" of the apparatuses to negotiate the contracts....

Unfortunately, the appeal of Séguy was interpreted by Rouge as "an opening that has to be pushed wider. It is necessary to launch a national committee of action."

Let us recall that only one year ago, the majority of the Central Committee refused any unconditional struggle for ~~unity~~ ~~action~~ stepping down [by the CP or SP in the second round of the elections in favor of the best-placed candidate], with the excuse being the need to define the "content" of the struggle for unity....

Since the appearance of the Theses of Tendency 4, they recognize at least implicitly the correctness of an unconditional appeal for stepping down and for a CP-SP majority. But today, in a paradoxically "reversed" form, the majority makes the same error of adaptation to the policy of the apparatuses....

During the whole divisionist campaign of the CP prior to March 1978, the leadership dismissed both the CP and SP with references to their equal responsibility for counterrevolutionary policies "historically." Today, they contrast the proposals of Séguy to the "rejection" of such proposals by the other union federations. In these two positions there is a common element: the inability to understand and combat the policy of the Stalinists, which they dismiss equally with the SP at a time when the CP was openly in the front lines of divisionism and yet, when the Stalinists are fully sharing responsibility with the other union federations for the division and subordination to the bourgeoisie in the criminal "contracts" policy, they present them as the heralds of unity.

* * *

Comradely, Caroline

Caroline