

February 3, 1980

To: JB, chair of coordinating committee
From : GG, for NSSO
Re: Proposed Pt 18 Forum

This is our response to the local center's proposal for a forum on Pt. 18. NSSO is interested in participating in such a forum, which will take on a new significance because of several recent events: First, the recent visit of a SC representative resulted in a clear articulation, for the first time, of the precise meaning of the content of Pt. 18. (See the five points on p. 2 of PF's January 16, 1980 letter) Secondly, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has generated an new interest in our general international line, which will undoubtedly lead to an intense struggle within the tendency. PWOC, for example, has come out in support of the Soviet actions, defending them as consistent with proletarian internationalism. It is now possible to talk about the clear political content of Pt 18 in the context of the new and difficult questions posed by recent world events.

Looking back at the original proposal for a forum (TJ, 12-8-79), we make the following suggestions. We believe that the primary focus of the forum should be on the recently articulated content of Pt 18, and the serious political questions raised by the content. The SC is requiring NSSO members to respond to the content of Pt. 18 as contained in PF's five points. We will do so, but we also take the position that all OCIC members should do the same, since the content of Pt 18 has been clearly articulated for the first time. In any case, we feel that the content of Pt 18 should be covered first, before moving to the secondary focus, which would be whether Pt 18 was a success in drawing a political line of demarcation with opportunism. Since for us, both these questions are major ones, about which there is much to be said, we suggest that they be separated into two distinct meetings of 2 or 3 hours each, with a period of weeks between them.

As to the first forum, on the content of Pt 18, we think the following questions should be addressed:

1. What is proletarian internationalism? What are the historical roots of this concept? What basic principles does it include which are unchanging? How has the interpretation of this concept changed throughout the history of the communist movement?

2. Pt 18 holds that it is impossible in the present context to practice proletarian internationalism without concretely identifying a particular imperialist nation as the "main enemy."

a. What are the historical and theoretical roots of the "main enemy" concept? Where does this idea come from?

b. Did Lenin require a recognition of a "main enemy" for the practice of proletarian internationalism? Didn't he in fact hold the opposite view? How is the present context distinguished?

c. If the "main enemy" concept is an application of the united front against fascism adopted by the Seventh Congress of the Comintern (we don't know if it is) shouldn't the OCIC examine the concept in this historical context? Isn't it dogmatic to adopt concepts from the Stalin period uncritically?

3. What are the historical and theoretical roots of the Theory of the Three Worlds--where do these ideas come from? Taking it first as a theory for explaining the world, what are its theoretical problems? (It is true that the TTW was not discussed or debated during the Pt 18 struggle. However, the OCIC summed up the Pt 18 struggle as being a break with the TTW. We suggest that all local forces engage in some coordinated study of the TTW prior to the conference.)

4. If the essential theoretical problem with the TTW is its failure to recognize imperialism as a world system, falling instead into an erroneous "national imperialism" theory (as argued by TMLC in Theoretical Review #9), how can Pt 18, which also targets on one national imperialism without recognizing imperialism as a world system, be distinguished, other than by the fact that it targets a different "main enemy."

5. If imperialism is really a world system, how is it possible to adopt a strategic perspective which targets a particular imperialist nation as the "main enemy," while at the same time leaving open the question of whether the USSR is part of the world system of imperialism? Doesn't Pt.18 assume that the USSR is not an imperialist nation. When PWOC opposes only the U.S. in Afghanistan, isn't this because it sees only one imperialist nation operating there.

We assume that a reasonable target date for the first forum would be no sooner than late March, since we believe that considerable study must go into answering the above questions, to which there are no easy answers. In the meantime, we would be interested in meeting with LC representatives to discuss the content, questions, format and logistics of the forums. Please consider me the NSSO contact for this work.

cc: TJ, DC/PP, MSC, CF