

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING No. 9, February 25, 1977

Present: Berman, Blackstock, Breitman, Hawkins, D. Jenness, L. Jenness, Jones, Lund, Miah, Rodríguez, Seigle, Sheppard, Stapleton, Waters, Wohlforth

Guests: Heisler, Jaquith, Matson

Chair: Blackstock

AGENDA: 1. Revolutionary Marxist Committee
2. Trotskyist Organizing Committee
3. World Movement Reports
4. Committee for Fair Ballot Access
5. Membership

1. REVOLUTIONARY MARXIST COMMITTEE

Seigle initiated discussion (continued from previous meeting).

Discussion

Motion: To test in action RMC proposal for fusion by recommending (1) They collaborate with the SWP in specific areas of common work, such as SCAR, trade union work, Militant sales, Detroit SWP mayoral campaign, or other activities to be worked out in consultation with Detroit local leadership; and (2) A series of classes on the SWP, its history, program, and perspectives, to be given by national party leaders to RMC membership.

Carried.

2. TROTSKYIST ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Seigle reported (see attached correspondence).

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

3. WORLD MOVEMENT

(Baumann, Feldman, and Foley invited for this point)

Sheppard and Wohlforth reported.

Discussion

(over)

4. COMMITTEE FOR FAIR BALLOT ACCESS

(Zimmermann invited for this point)

Zimmermann reported that at the initiative of CODEL a series of meetings was held in December and January between representatives of various smaller parties, including the McCarthy campaign people, to discuss future collaboration on ballot lawsuits. This led to the formation of the Committee for Fair Ballot Access, with the SWP, CP, SLP, and McCarthy '76 campaign as initiating participants. Our proposal that Byron Ackerman go on staff of this committee for a month to do preliminary sponsor and fundraising work has been accepted. The CP has indicated they will also provide a staff person for this initial month. A decision concerning the future perspectives of the committee will be made at the end of the first month.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

5. MEMBERSHIP

Seigle reported on recommendation of the Oakland branch that V.K. be re-admitted to the party.

Discussion

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Oakland branch.

Carried.

Meeting adjourned.



14 CHARLES LANE,
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10014
(212) 242-5530

March 1, 1977

Trotskyist Organizing Committee
P.O. Box 831
New York, N.Y. 10008

Dear Comrades,

We were glad to receive your letter of February 7 and the Political Committee has discussed your proposal for a meeting. Unfortunately, we have only sketchy knowledge about your organization, your views on the major political questions, and the nature and extent of your activities.

Before arranging a meeting we would like to ask you to send us more material. We don't have a file of your publications. Could you send us a set? We would also like to see any internal bulletins you publish. In what cities does your group function? How many members do you have? What areas of work are you concentrating on?

We would like to have a chance to study this additional material from you before we arrange a meeting to discuss your proposal.

Fraternally,

Mary-Alice Waters

Mary-Alice Waters
for the Political Committee

Trotskyist Organizing Committee

FEB 8 1977

P.O. Box 831

New York, N.Y. 10008

February 7, 1977

Political Committee
Socialist Workers Party
14 Charles Lane
New York, N. Y. 10014

Dear Comrades,

Our enclosed declaration, "Unity to Build The Fourth International," presents the political basis for our decision to seek unity with the Socialist Workers Party.

As our declaration states, we have come to this decision in the recognition, "that it is now necessary and possible to close ranks, that we can resolve the substantive differences which remain as loyal members of the Socialist Workers Party, and that in uniting with it, we help to build the international party of revolutionary Marxism, the Fourth International."

We propose that a meeting be held at an early date to arrange for discussions to clarify remaining differences and the political and organizational requirements for achieving unity.

Fraternally,


Harry Turner

Declaration of the Trotskyist Organizing Committee

UNITY TO BUILD THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL I

World Capitalism in Crisis

The sustained period of world capitalist economic expansion which followed World War II is at an end. The primary curve of world economy is now downward. The present "recovery" is only a pause before an even more precipitous decline.

Attempting to maintain and invigorate the "recovery," the ruling classes in the advanced capitalist countries vacillate between a policy of "stimulation," utilizing the techniques of Keynes, and one of "austerity." But, in restabilizing capitalism with the help of international Stalinism, in stimulating the growth of the productive forces and in dampening the downturns of the business cycles in the post-war period through budget deficit financing, monetary and credit expansion, the "sorcerer's apprentices" of finance capital let loose the present inflationary flood. "Austerity," i.e., attacks on the working and living standards of the working class and the mass of the population through wage-freezes, "incomes policies," mass layoffs, and the slashing of educational, health, welfare and transportation services, worsens the present catastrophic unemployment rate, particularly among the Black and other especially oppressed minorities. Both policies move the masses into greater struggle in defense of their standards of life.

The thrust of deflationary policies -- "balancing the budget," constraining money and credit -- threatens to rupture an international financial structure distended by decades of credit expansion. Despite the frantic manipulations of the ruling class, the present "stagflation" can only be followed by a deflationary collapse and the resulting slashing of the values of capital. It is in this manner that the severely eroded rate of profit is restored. But, this "solution" also carries with it a threat to the continued existence of capitalism.

Objective and Subjective Factors

Once again as in the period before the second World War, the objective economic and social prerequisites for the socialist revolution are maturing in the advanced and underdeveloped sectors of world capitalism with the reassertion of the contradictions of imperialist capitalism in their sharpest forms. In every capitalist country, the growing economic instability -- which increased oil prices have only served to worsen -- unsettles the social and political equilibria. The tendency of the productive forces to grow without limit and the nationally delimited world capitalist market (the fundamental cause of the world crisis), imperialist restrictions on the growth of the productive forces in the underdeveloped countries, the necessity for imperialism to reestablish its control over its sources of raw materials and its superprofits and the fundamental irreconcilability of collective and capitalist property relations, now places on the historical agenda trade wars, predatory imperialist assaults on the underdeveloped countries and the degenerated and reformed workers' states on which they balance, and a new world war threatening the continued existence of humanity.

The severity of the world crisis is attested to by the proliferation of "left" and "right" Bonapartist (military-police) regimes in the underdeveloped countries, and by the increasing resort to Bonapartist measures (the strengthening of the executive) in the advanced capitalist countries.

The existence of the Soviet degenerated workers' state makes possible the existence of "left" Bonapartist regimes on capitalist property foundations in the underdeveloped countries, e.g., Syria, Peru. Balancing between imperialism and the Soviet Union, these regimes maneuver with their masses in attempting to limit imperialist superexploitation and to develop a modern industry, while attempting to prevent a socialist revolution which would also topple them. Despite the counterrevolutionary "popular front" policies of international Stalinism, the transformation of Cuba and the bulk of Indochina into states not qualitatively differing from it and other deformed workers' states was, fundamentally, possible because of the existence of the Soviet Union. Trotsky's theory of the Permanent Revolution continues to demonstrate its validity: in the underdeveloped countries, only the socialist revolution, only the workers in power allied to the peasantry, can provide a genuine solution to democratic and national tasks. Only the victory of the socialist revolution in at least a number of advanced countries, can provide the economic foundations upon which a socialist society can be constructed.

As in the underdeveloped countries, the working class in the advanced, now actively seeking a path to the socialist revolution (Portugal, Spain, Italy, France, Britain), is held back by its own parties. In barring the way, the traitorous Stalinists and Social-Democrats everywhere disorient the masses, destroy the revolutionary opportunities, and open the door to the counter-revolution and to fascism.

In the degenerated and deformed workers' states as well, under the heavy hand of the Bonapartist bureaucracies, a political revolution matures as the incompatibility between the expanding productive forces in collective property form and the parasitic bureaucratic castes is increasingly demonstrated.

The Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership

Trotsky pointed out in 1938 in the Transitional Program, The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International, that the economic prerequisites for the socialist revolution had not only ripened, but had "begun to get somewhat rotten," and that, without the revolution, the whole of humanity was threatened with a descent into barbarism. The further development of the productive forces, of science and technique at the service of capital in the epoch of imperialist decay, now poisons the earth, seas and air even in its "peaceful" pursuits and threatens all of humanity with nuclear extermination. Now as then, the crisis of humanity is a crisis of revolutionary leadership.

As history continues to demonstrate in this period, without a working class vanguard party of the Leninist type, every revolutionary opportunity is in danger of being transformed into its opposite. But, the rate of development of the revolutionary party at this point lags far behind that of the emerging revolutionary opportunities. In this situation, every revolutionary Marxist has the greatest obligation to find a principled basis upon which those organizations and individuals identifying with Trotskyism can unite to overcome this growing disproportion.

An appraisal of these forces in the United States, however, discloses, on the one hand, small tendencies which either combine academic "Marxist" sectarian purism with an admixture of opportunism or are disoriented and demoralized by a heavy-handed bureaucratic and adventurist leadership, and also, small, isolated, ineffectual groups unable to intervene in the working class in any way commensurate with emerging opportunities for leadership. On the other hand, there is the Socialist Workers Party, in which there is taking place a reemphasis on trade union activity and on the construction of a labor party independent of the capitalist parties, on the nature of the epoch as one of imperialist decay, and on the validity and applicability of the Transitional Program of Trotskyism; which has achieved a substantial growth, as witness its ability to launch a nationwide election campaign, to achieve ballot status in 28 states and to garner more than 90,000 votes; and in which, in contradistinction to most of its "anti-Pabloist" critics, democratic-centralist practice prevails enabling political and organizational disagreements to be seriously discussed.

In the preface to the pamphlet, Spartacist League Split, the cadre which was to initiate Vanguard Newsletter, the forerunner to the present Trotskyist Organizing Committee, stated the following:

"The post-World War upsurge of world capitalism and the development of deformed workers' states, produced incredible theoretical confusion and shattered the world movement of Trotskyism. The sharpening of the contradictions of capitalism in the United States and on a world scale, the beginning of the economic downturn, heralds the beginning of greater clarity. The ebb in the revolutionary socialist movement, as seen by its fractionation into small circles, will, in the coming period, be reversed, as objective circumstances make clear the programmatic basis for its reconstruction. And this demands discussion, debate and a principled unity in action by those who see themselves as revolutionary socialists."

Unity with the SWP

We believe that the objective development is now providing the basis for programmatic clarity in overcoming the present strategic and tactical disagreements among those identifying with the Transitional Program and the full program of Trotskyism. We believe that organizational narrowness and pettiness, especially at this time, can only serve the interests of the ruling class and its reformist Social-Democratic and Stalinist agents in the working class. We call upon the Socialist Workers Party for unity discussion in the recognition -- a recognition which we believe is now becoming more widespread -- that it is now necessary and possible to close ranks, that we can resolve the substantive differences which remain as loyal members of the Socialist Workers Party, and that in uniting with it, we help to build the international party of revolutionary Marxism, the Fourth International.

COPY

COPY

COPY

January 17, 1977
3284 23rd Street
San Francisco, CA. 94110

Larry Seigle
SWP N.O.

Dear Larry,

You may recall that I mentioned to you a couple months ago that I had had some conversations here with three members of the Trotskyist Organizing Committee, a group with some members here and in New York. At the time I said that I would send you a report on our conversations....

One of their people came in today and handed me the enclosed letter they received from their national leader, Harry Turner. As you can see, he is proposing that they approach the SWP with the perspective of fusion. The person I talked to here said that he expected that the organization would agree to Turner's proposal.

They said that Turner "didn't know anyone in the SWP" and so they were delegated to come talk to me to find out how they should go about initiating contact with the Party to discuss their proposal for fusion. They want the discussion to be initiated in New York by Turner rather than both there and here because they are afraid that if they discussed in both places they might end up doing different things.

To make a long story short, I told them that they should have Turner contact you and that you would fix them up with someone to talk to.

A few notes on the group. I have met three of their people here (they might not have any more). Each of them has been around politics for a while. One was in the SWP in the late thirties, left with Schactman, went to Latin America.... and ended up in this group. He likes the SWP the best and works closely with us. He takes a bookstore shift regularly for the Mission branch and helps staff tables at political meetings, etc.

The second is Earl Gilman. He left the SWP in the fifties some time, and has been in various sects since then, I think including both the Sparts and the Workers League. He is the least impressed with the SWP and seems to me an inveterate hairsplitting sectarian.

The third is the "Charlie" addressed in the letter enclosed. He is a vacillator, and tends to go from working with us somewhat to sectarianism. He helped us petition.

They do not seem to be overly homogeneous. For instance, at the South Africa rally we participated in last November, one of them helped us staff our table inside while another of them passed out a leaflet outside attacking the meeting because a "bourgeois politician" was speaking.

Internationally they don't have any particular tendency that they view as their own. They have some relations with both the OCI--especially with a group of OCRFI supporters in Bolivia--and with Varga. As for their attitude to the Fourth International, you can see Turner's letter.

Nationally their politics is highlighted by two points. First, they disagree with us on the national question. It is my impression that this disagreement is based on theoretical objections to all national struggles as bourgeois.

Second, they are or seem to be relatively indifferent to all aspects of politics beyond trade-union caucusism. They put most of their attention to this kind of work, trying to organize caucuses around issues of union democracy, running in various unions for office on the plank of union democracy, and abstractly trying to raise the idea of the labor party. In this work, as in others, there does not appear to be homogeneity on how or what to do. Earl and Charlie once had a big argument in front of me about what they each should be doing in their respective unions, and agreed to disagree.

This is a short sketch, but I wanted to get this in the mail. Since I don't have a picture of more of their membership, I frankly don't have any recommendation on what to do with them. One of their members--the guy who does a bookstore shift--would be a valuable member of our party, even with his disagreements on the national question, assuming that he could be loyal. The other two I'm not overly impressed with. If you meet with Turner perhaps you can get a better impression of the group.

Here, I'll show Tony Turner's letter.

Comradely,

s/John Studer

P.S. In the letter they mention the Socialist League. In case you aren't familiar with this group, it is the little sect that Cagle runs.

[see following attached letter]

January 5, 1977

Dear Earl, Charlie and comrades,

Corinne and I returned from Mexico late Sunday night straight from the warmth of Yucatan to the cold and wet of New York, but happy to get back.

We enjoyed the trip immensely. Unfortunately, I was unable to accomplish anything political. I was unable to make contact with those whom you, Earl, suggested. German did not respond to my letter, perhaps because of the limited time element, and more probably because of the Christmas holiday, in which vacationing seemed to be the rule. Without an initial contact to provide us with the addresses of groups such as the OCI, and given the repressive nature of the Mexican regime under the facade of parliamentarianism, e.g., the recent arrests and torture of Trotskyist and other militants, we opted for discretion, rather than blundering around possibly creating difficulties, not only for ourselves, but also for our contacts. As you know, Earl, the left organizations are not even listed in the classified telephone directory.

The sharpness of the economic crisis is clearly visible in Mexico City even to the casual tourist. Alongside the affluent bourgeois and petty-bourgeois, are the ragged and hungry Indian women, their children and the street children at every corner. The unemployed men and women workers stand in the Zocalo waiting to be hired at starvation wages. The contrast between wealth and poverty reminded us of the cartoons by Groz in *Ecco Homo* of Germany in the early '20's. A social crisis of the first magnitude is obviously maturing beneath the heavy hand of the PRI, its extra-legal goon squads and its labor "charros." Now, if only the struggles of the industrial workers could be united to those of the landless peasants and agricultural laborers in Sonora, Sinaloa and elsewhere! I will try to get an article on Mexico out in the next two weeks or so. To bad that it will not have the benefit of discussions with the revolutionists there.

Now to the organizational question to which I have been giving a great deal of thought. I believe that we should wait no longer for the SWP to come to us, but rather, that we should take the initiative and make a serious proposal to them for formal discussions seeking to achieve organizational unity. In preparation for such an overture on our part, I am preparing a draft declaration which would make clear the political basis for our unity discussion proposal, and which, I hope, will enable us, not only to take our own members into the SWP, but also perhaps, even be instrumental in convincing such groups as the Socialist League to follow our example. I would also hope that the final declaration could be the basis on which our sympathizers could be convinced to become our members, so that we can go into the discussions with the SWP with a maximum of organizational strength.

You comrades have, no doubt, read the documents of the 1974 World Congress of the Fourth International which appeared in Intercontinental Press. I am sending you copies of the Leninist-Trotskyist faction counterresolution, "The World Political Situation and Immediate Tasks," the counterreport by Hansen, "On the Orientation of the FI in Latin America," and the Statutes of the FI, so that you can refresh your recollection. As you know, the SWP is the strongest component of the LT faction.

Although we continue to have serious differences with the counterresolution, particularly with the section on nationalism, with concrete tactical applications of it by the SWP, and, although we would have posed a number of points quite differently, the counterresolution, with its emphasis on work within the mass organizations of the working class, on "advancing class-struggle, left-wing formations in the trade unions

in opposition to the conservative bureaucracy," on "independent working class political action," e.g., in the US, the Labor Party, and on the validity and applicability of the Transitional Program, does provide a principled basis for unity and for working within the SWP and the LT faction internationally to convince their members of the validity of our positions. Of course, we will continue to make our differences entirely clear outside the SWP until we join it, and inside it whenever the opportunity to do so arises as loyal members of the organization. In our discussions with the SWP, we should also explore the possibility that the counterresolution's emphasis on the propagandist ("accumulation of cadres"), rather than the agitational nature of the period (providing leadership in struggle), which was advanced against the guerrillaist orientation of the IT, may now be seen by at least a section of the LT faction as overcautious and outdated in the light of developments over the past two years.

On the draft declaration (possible heading - "Unity to Build the Fourth International"), I propose the following points:

1. The crisis of world capitalism with the world-wide economic downturn, and with it, the growing social and political instability marking a pre-revolutionary development.

2. The necessity for a new assessment of the revolutionary potential of existing organizations identifying as Trotskyist since the splits in the SWP in 1964 and 1965. On the one hand, academic "Marxist" sectarian purism laced with a heavy dose of opportunism; a disoriented heavy-handed bureaucratic adventurism; small isolated, ineffectual groups unable to intervene in the working class movement in any way commensurate with the emerging opportunities for leadership. On the other in the SWP, a reemphasis on trade union activity and on the construction of a labor party independent of the capitalist parties, on the nature of the epoch as one of imperialist decay and on the validity and applicability of the Transitional Program of Trotskyism; its enlarged numbers, as witness its ability to launch a nationwide election campaign, to achieve ballot status in 36 states and to garner almost 100,000 votes; in contrast to most of its "anti-Pabloist" critics, the democratic-centralist practice which prevails within it and which enables political and organizational differences to be seriously discussed.

3. Our conviction that the objective developments will produce the objective basis for clarity, for overcoming existing differences, and for solving the crisis of leadership. It might be useful to quote the following from the preface to the pamphlet, Spartacist League Split:

"The post-World War upsurge of world capitalism and the development of deformed workers states, produced incredible theoretical confusion and shattered the world movement of Trotskyism. - The sharpening of the contradictions of capitalism in the United States and on a world scale, the beginning of the economic downturn, heralds the beginning of greater clarity. The ebb in the revolutionary socialist movement, as seen by its fractionation into small circles, will, in the coming period, be reversed, as objective circumstances make clear the programmatic basis for its reconstruction."

Will the SWP leadership respond favorably? I believe that they will if they are convinced that we are making a serious political proposal, i.e., that we are not engaging in a maneuver, that we are not on an "entry" expedition which has for its purpose the "ripping off" of their cadre, that we intend to function as loyal members to build the organization, that we will present our differences in a loyal manner,

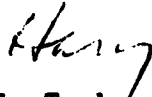
that we will abide by democratic-centralist procedures, that we will accept the program of the SWP majority (including those aspects which we criticize) and loyally carry it out.

I believe that, under these conditions, the SWP leadership can only see our fusion as a positive step for the organization. Not only does it gain mature, knowledgeable, theoretically advanced cadre, for the most part trade union activists, but also the possibility that our fusion may act as a catalyst on other groups identifying with Trotskyism. As I have already indicated, I believe that we should certainly try to function along these lines to the greatest degree possible. But, let us suppose for the moment that the SWP leaders reject our overture. Given our entirely principled, open and correct, i.e., Bolshevik, attitude toward unity, I believe that the SWP leaders would have a difficult if not impossible task of justifying this rejection to their members. In that event, we would certainly not be the losers.

We can, of course, expect a ferocious barrage from both the Spartacist and Workers Leagues, no doubt echoed by the smaller sects. I, for one, face this prospect with complete equanimity, if not indifference. The main political question for us is now the organizational side of politics, not only to espouse a correct program, but to find the organizational means to implement it, and to overcome the increasing disproportion between the rapidly maturing objective factors and the lagging subjective factor, the building of the revolutionary Marxist organization.

Hugh, who leaves for Houston at the end of the month, while not averse to my proposal, has indicated that he wishes to reexamine the 1974 counterresolution and to read the draft declaration before coming to a definite conclusion. So, I intend to give the draft declaration first priority while waiting for the reaction of you comrades to my proposal.

Comradely,



P.S. Do you have any knowledge of the Mezhrayonka Tendency mentioned in the page on Topics and Reporters?