

XS: PC

SEP 13 1977

Paris, Sept. 2, 1977

New York

Dear Gus,

This is a report on the LCR Central Committee meeting, which took place Aug. 27-31. I didn't stay for the last day of it, when the votes were taken, and I probably missed quite a bit by not understanding all the French, but I'm just writing down things that I am sure of.

This was a special, long CC meeting to deal with some of the most important questions for the "rentrée"--the return to school and jobs after summer vacations. The only other observers from other parties, apart from me, ~~was~~ were three comrades from the GRS of the Antilles. Jim P. attended one day of it, as well.

The first point on the agenda was the formation of a youth organization. The LCR congress last January had decided in principle that one should be launched, but there had been virtually no discussion in the organization leading up to that decision.

The purpose of the report and discussion at this Central Committee meeting was to begin the political discussion on the reasons why such an organization was needed and to "set the dates" for actually doing it. It was decided to call a special congress of the whole LCR for January 1978, which would decide on the character of the organization and timing of its founding congress. It will be called the JCR (Jeunes Communistes Révolutionnaires). A monthly magazine to prepare the way for the JCR is supposed to be started in January as well.

The report by Olivier and discussion on this point indicated that there is an important convergence on this question--more than I had realized.

It was projected that the JCR should be politically tied to the LCR and to the Fourth International. Only one member of the Central Committee argued that the organization should be a vague "revolutionary youth movement" uniting young people of all the "far left" currents. Olivier's report and the written text he presented specifically opposed this conception. He noted that there was no reason to suppose that "youth politics" was any different from "adult politics," and that since the LCR had been unable to achieve fusion with any of the other "far left" organizations, there was no reason why the same divisions would not arise among the youth.

One comrade took the position that the JCR should be allied with the LCR but not the Fourth International.

Verla spoke against that idea, saying that even the fact that it was raised pointed to a big problem of depoliticization and decrease of internationalist consciousness in the Ligue. It is not seen by the membership as integrally tied to the International. some of

It was also projected that the JCR should be organizationally independent, having its own congresses, choosing its own leadership, etc, and that it will be democratic-centralist. Olivier's written contribution proposed that LCR members would formally operate as a fraction inside the JCR, and that both the LCR and JCR would assign representatives to sit on each other's leadership bodies.

What was most surprising to me was the change in the comrades' attitude toward the youth resolution of the 1969 world congress. Olivier mentioned the document in his report and summary, saying that it was the first document to deal with the new youth radicalization in a systematic way, but that it was somewhat out of date now, since the sharpening of the economic crisis has brought forward some new problems. He referred to the document as having been adopted by the world congress.

I pointed out to him afterwards that it hadn't been adopted. He said he knew about the opposition of the French comrades to the resolution at that time and had read my answer to them. He said he thought many of the French arguments were totally wrong.

Olivier's written contribution, on which his report was based registered several changes in position by the French comrades from those of the past. They were:

1. In the post-May '68 period, the youth radicalization was seen as politically dominated by the Mao-spontaneist current and therefore as petty-bourgeois. This led to the Ligue's "underestimating the roots and dimensions of the youth radicalization as a social force." Olivier's document says that the growing contradictions of capitalism ~~the dominant government to political industrialization~~ "tend, on the one hand, to give an anticapitalist dimension to struggles by all layers of youth and, on the other hand, to stimulate a radicalization around common aspirations and themes."

2. In past years, says the document, the Ligue has taken the "history is breathing down our necks" view of the problem of building a revolutionary party. That is, it was thought that the revolutionary crisis allowed no time even to build the revolutionary party, much less a youth organization as well. The youth organization was seen as a separate thing, not as "an element in the construction of a workers party."

There are still some problems of contradictory formulations, however. While struggles of youth are seen as having an anticapitalist dimension there is still the insis-

tence that the "interests" of the mass of students are somehow contradictory to the interests of the working class. Olivier writes in a second article that, " We intervene in the schools in the name of defense of the interests of the workers, of a school in the service of the workers, of the class program of the proletariat, and not for defense of the interests of university or high school students or teachers, or for a transitional program of students, high school students, or teachers."

A related problem with the way the JCR was projected was what I thought was a downgrading of the importance of university student work. The aim is for the JCR to become relatively quickly an organization of majority working class youth and "pre-worker" youth--that is, students in the CETs (vocational high schools). The problem, says Olivier's document, is that right now the LCR's forces among the youth consist of 400 university students, 80 academic high school students, and only 10 CET students. Therefore, the danger was posed that the university students will take over and dominate the organization. The example of Spain was cited, where the LCR kept the university students entirely out of their youth organization (their work is organized in a student commission of the LCR).

With all the talk about working-class youth, however, the question of immigrant youth was never mentioned in the report or written contribution, with only a brief mention in the discussion.

No figures were presented about the changes in the size of the student population in France or the percentage of students from working-class backgrounds. One comrade told me only about 10 percent are from the working class, but that a very high percentage of students work while going to school--perhaps 70 percent.

Please show at least this part of the report to the YSA comrades. We should try to get Olivier or someone else from the LCR to come to the next YSA convention, and perhaps the YSA could send someone to the LCR congress in January.

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Next was a discussion on the Malville demonstration and the LCR's work in the antinuclear movement. This was a good discussion. They thought they had been slow in relating to this movement but now had to get in with both feet. The internationalist dimension of the struggle was noted, as well as the big opportunities for us given the negative positions of the CP and SP.

Their positions on nuclear power itself, the basis on which we should oppose it, and the question of nuclear power stations in the workers states seemed to me basically the same as the positions laid out at our convention.

One Central Committee member took the position that we should oppose nuclear power operations not only because

of the risks of danger, but because we should oppose all forms of power that are inherently centralized. We need decentralized power, he said, so the workers can control it. One or two others made some remarks that tended in this direction, and it obviously reflects a ~~xxx~~ view in a layer of the organization.

The main discussion was over how to relate to the slogans that are being pushed by the reformist elements--the call for a "moratorium," and the SP's call for a referendum on the nuclear question. The consensus seemed to be that we should call for a total halt to the government's nuclear program, but at the same time call for a national discussion, testimony by scientists about the dangers, and the right of the majority to know the facts and have a say.

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Then Robs gave a report on the SWP convention and the situation in the international, which was quite accurate and good. It will be printed in a French internal bulletin. The only problems were in regard to the Bolshevik Tendency, and Garza's report to the closed session.

On the Bolshevik Tendency, Robs noted that the convention motion had been to urge only the two main factions to dissolve, not the BT, and that Barry's report had scarcely mentioned the BT except to accuse them of being a gang. He thought this implied that we thought they were already essentially out of the International, or should be but.

A number of people asked me about this informally, so later I asked to speak on it to try to clear it up. I said how the convention's call for dissolution was not a general call for "all factions" to dissolve, but for the IMT and LTF to dissolve, for specific reasons--political evolution, the long years of their existence, etc. The BT is a separate problem, which we did not try to deal with at the convention. But we are for keeping them in the International, answering them politically and organizationally, etc.

On Catarino's report, Robs said that a number of comrades had spoken against the report but then they all voted for it. The implication was that there was some kind of intimidation or pressure--although of course he couldn't cite any limitations on democracy whatsoever.

Matti gave an enthusiastic supplementary report, ending up with a mention of Bernadette Devlin's role at the convention. He was later accused by a couple of comrades in the discussion of being "sentimental" in his newfound appreciation of the SWP.

There wasn't much discussion on Robs' report; I'll only mention what Bensaid and Krivine said. Bensaid said, we've analyzed in the past how the tendencies and factions in the International have been the reflections of pressures of the class struggle. But now it's not so clear what are the objective pressures that are leading to certain convergences. We have to figure this out. He also said that the articles by Michaloux on Portugal that we pointed to as indicating some convergence dealt with a period of reflux in the class struggle and perhaps that is why we have more agreement. But our differences over the period of revolutionary crisis in Portugal continue, he said.

Krivine came out with a blast against Matti's "subjectivism" in praising the SWP, saying we can't forget our big differences. For example, we can't forget the SWP's expulsion of the IT, even though now they seem to be doing good in fusing with the RMC. He said the real test of the SWP would be whether it now "pays its dues" and whether it will agree on one organ of the International. I didn't have a chance to set the record straight that we pay no dues.

In his summary Robs came back again to how strange he thought it was that there were no differences over line in the SWP.

During this point on the agenda they had an IMT meeting and voted with little opposition to recommend dissolution of the IMT. There was some confusion at the beginning over whether to attend the meeting you had to agree with the old positions of the IMT, or with the new declaration. Bensaid announced that if you agreed with either you could attend.

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I'm going to stop here and bring this first part to the post office. Monday I'll send off a final part of this report, which will take up the points on democratic centralism and on a disciplinary matter concerning some private mimeographed letters sent out by Matti.

Comradely,

Carole

Caroline

SEP 15 1977

Paris, Sept. 3, 1977

New York

Dear Gus,

Here is the last part of the report on the LCR Central Committee meeting.

For the point on democratic centralism, a written document was presented from the Political Bureau, called "What Kind of Democratic Centralism (for a revolutionary Marxist organization, with a minimally working-class social composition, in the third age of capitalism)". I ~~meant~~ meant to ask someone what the "third age of capitalism" was, but forgot.

The document was not adopted because it was considered too polemical; another version is supposed to be written to initiate discussion on this question. But I'll summarize it because the general arguments will be coming up again.

The first part of the document (which was primarily the work of Jeanette) was an attempt to answer the theories of the ~~new~~ CCA (the new Pabloite organization), which have made definite inroads into the LCR.

The theory of the CCA, as outlined in the document, ^{is} ~~and~~ the following: Oppression under capitalist society is no longer based fundamentally on the expropriation of surplus value, but on many, separate forms of oppression. This has broadened anticapitalist consciousness and led to the rise of new social movements--women, youth, ecology, nationalities, etc.

The greater level of "spontaneous consciousness," partly stemming from the higher cultural level of the masses, means a different kind of relationship between party and masses than in the past. For example, they say, most aspects of the revolutionary program for our epoch have been imposed from the outside on revolutionary organizations by these new social movements. Thus the program of a revolutionary organization should be based on self-determination for the various social groups to determine their own demands, which will then be mediated by the party. They also propose the right to form permanent tendencies and work groups with the right to public expression of differences.

Their theory also revises the nature of the state, saying that its function is no longer fundamentally one of repression. The state itself is said to be subject to the new social crisis, with radicalization and a form of "dual power" rising up right inside of it.

Jeanette answers some of this, exposing the revision of the theory of the state and showing why the party has to be a combat instrument, but the argument is certainly not complete, and she makes some big concessions to the Pabloite theories. For example: "It is unquestionable that a cer-

tain conception of relationships of authority--of the relationship between leaders and those who are led--which prevailed at the beginning of the century ~~are~~ no longer valid today. And it is not by denying this reality that one will be in the best position to fight the revisionist theories to which we will return later.

"It is the expressions of Lenin or of Trotsky about the "leaders" and the masses which cannot be used today. Lenin, who got angry at those who would try to counterpose authority "on high" ~~to~~ that "at the base", would no doubt find it more difficult to make himself understood today.

"We agree with Sheila Rowbotham that in capitalist Europe today ~~you must not~~ we must not 'reproduce the structures of authority and domination characteristic of capitalism,' even though it is also necessary to safeguard the effectiveness and cohesion of the party. The women's liberation movement has brought this problem to the fore with particular sharpness--a problem that was not posed at the time of Lenin and Trotsky and which justifies in our opinion the measures taken in regard to internal women's groups."

The second half of the document was basically a polemic against the ex-LTFers in France and Matti for supposedly coming by another route to the same organizational position of the CCA--for the right to permanent tendencies; and also a polemic against the international LTF and the right of factions.

The main point of the document was to reaffirm an April 1976 Central Committee motion outlawing factions and imposing limits on the right of tendency and the right to expression in the internal bulletin in preconvention discussion. (I think we have a translation of this, in the lower right drawer in the desk in the little storeroom.)

The reason such restrictions are needed is that workers supposedly don't want to read a lot of documents. The document says: "...it must be stressed that participation in tendency debates as they exist today is a cultural and social privilege for a certain layer of members; it is impossible for a wage-earner, even a white-collar worker (not to mention an industrial worker working 40 hours a week, having a spouse, a child, and some involvement in mass work) to participate democratically, and to vote from a position of knowledge (having read the key documents) at our congress."

She argues against the right to factions, as guaranteed in the statutes of the international, on the grounds that they are a party within the party, with their own discipline (the implication is) above the discipline of the party. She gives some quotes from Trotsky in The Third International After Lenin and The New Course, where he draws the distinction between temporary ideological groupings and the dangerous situation reflected by the formation of factions. But she

neglects to point out that in each of the quotes Trotsky was arguing against the prohibition of factions as any kind of general solution.

Jeannette said this question is going to present a problem in drawing up the international document on democratic centralism, because the French leadership is in disagreement with the rest of the international leadership.

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The last agenda point I'll describe was over the "Matti Letters." Matti used the organization's mimeograph and stamp machine to send out some letters to certain LCR members. Two of them were returned by the post office to the LCR, because even though there was no return address, there was the stamp machine number.

The letters give information on United Secretariat meetings, LCR Political Bureau and Central Committee meetings. They lay out tasks for "our comrades," or "ex-TA comrades." One of them invites people to come to Paris to help Matti prepare for how to intervene in this last Central Committee meeting.

Even if the form was disloyal and totally indefensible, much of the content is not. He urges his people to build the LCR, to get involved in its mass work, and to work with comrades of all tendencies.

Matti agreed that it was wrong to mimeograph the letters and to use the organization's stamps, but he concentrated in his defense on saying that the crisis of the organization and lack of information drove people to such methods, and that comrades of the IMT routinely use similar methods, so that the attack against him was discriminatory because he was in a minority. He claimed that his correspondence was "personal," and reminded the IMTers that in the past they had defended the right to such "personal" correspondence. In informal discussions, he mentioned, ~~for example,~~ having seen "personal correspondence" ~~of~~ of IMT leaders much worse than his--for example, letters planning the split in Spain.

The initial report on this by the Political Bureau had recommended kicking Matti off the Political Bureau as well as removing him as a full-timer. Nemo correctly pointed out in the discussion that taking him off the PB was not correct as a disciplinary measure. A lot of others were worried, too, that to take him off the PB would be seen in the organization as simply an attack against a minority. So finally it was decided only to remove him as a full timer.

The discussion on this point was very confused and demoralizing. It brought out the depth of cynicism and factionalism in the LCR leadership. Only one leader from Marseille seemed to have any conception of building a team. He noted that in Marseille they have a city leadership made

up of comrades from I think five tendencies, all trying to get along and lead the organization together. He pointed out that letters like Matti's, giving special instructions and information to his people, cut right across the difficult job of the city leadership in trying to work together and build confidence.

That's about it. It was an interesting four days.

There's been no one in the bureau this week except Leonard. Everyone is apparently still on vacation.

Comradely,

Carole

Caroline

PS: Gus, let me know if there are any special regulations regarding throwing out garbage here.

PPS: I think it would be good to send a copy of the SWP Discussion Bulletin with Mike's article on the antinuclear movement directly to the Swiss section, since their work is mentioned so prominently in it.

Under separate cover I'm sending the documents from the CC meeting on the youth question, democratic centralism, and the Matti Letters.