

Honowitz

14 Charles Lane
New York, N. Y. 10014

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FOR PC INFORMATION ONLY

Dear Comrades,

The attached items are for the information of Political Committee members only.

There are six items attached: 1) A report by Peter Camejo on the discussion on Latin America held at the March 20-21 United Secretariat meeting; 2) Excerpts from the minutes of the same meeting dealing with Latin America; 3) A report by Patti Iiyama on discussions with Bala Tampoe held during her recent trip to Australia; 4) A translation of the "Domingo letter" circulating in Argentina; 5) An unedited transcription of a tape recording of a lecture by Tariq Ali, delivered at a cadre school for members of the British International Marxist Group and of the Spartacus League, in February of this year; 6) a report by George Novack on a conversation with Brezard of the French Communist League.

Comradely,

Barry Sheppard

Barry Sheppard
National Office

REPORT ON UNITED SECRETARIAT MEETING OF MARCH 20-21

by Peter Camejo

The last point on the agenda was Latin America. The discussion began Sunday at about 11:00 A.M. and continued until about 6:00 P.M.

We learned upon arriving for the meeting that not only would Jean Pierre be there but that Livio had also visited Argentina and would be giving a report.

Livio's report began with a long analysis of the situation in Argentina. In essence he tried to paint a pre-revolutionary situation. I will not outline here everything he said but simply give a summary of this aspect of his report.

According to Livio the bourgeoisie has its "back up against the wall." There's no room to maneuver. The economic situation is forcing the bourgeoisie into a showdown with the working class. The Peruvian road, the Brazilian road, etc., are not really likely to be repeated in Argentina. In Argentina the army is the key and without the army "everything would collapse." For there to be an electoral outcome there would have to be an agreement with the Peronists and that has not happened, etc.

The key city and the vanguard in Argentina is Cordoba which has the most modern industries. In Cordoba the trade union bureaucracy "lost control" during the recent struggles. The workers would listen only to their local left leaders. A vanguard numbering in the tens of thousands exists, possibly numbering 100,000.

The political vanguard is the same as the international tendencies except in Argentina you have the left Peronistas. CGT-A (Ongaro's ultraleft so-called trade union federation) failed as a trade union but, according to Livio, is a pole of attraction for revolutionaries and some revolutionary tendencies have grouped around the CGT-A. (Later on I asked him to name the revolutionary tendencies that had grouped around the CGT-A since my information was that the CGT-A is nothing but Ongaro and five of our own comrades from the MO tendency. Livio dropped the whole thing and said nothing.)

Then he went into the left tendencies that either oppose armed struggle or at least have not initiated it. The CP is growing a little. The PCR (left student-based split-off from the CP) is almost exclusively student oriented. The Maoists in the Communist Vanguard are oriented to the factories and have influence in some factories. In some of the demonstrations in Cordoba pictures of Mao were carried. They (the Maoists) attack armed struggle as being adventuristic. (Livio made no mention of either the Lambertists -- Politica Obrera -- or of La Verdad.)

Then he went on to the groups carrying out armed struggle. He said there were three Peronist groups: the Montoneros, FAL and the FAP. The FAP is the most Peronista. The FAL claims to be Marxist-Leninist and came out of the PCR but it recently split with one group accusing the other of being too militarist.

Then, of course, the ERP, which is Combatiente's "army." The ERP is by far the most active of all the groups by the judgment of everybody. You can read about them in the daily papers every day. They are the only people who carry out actions on a national scale. The FAL has carried out more spectacular actions.

At this point Livio briefly mentioned that the Communist Tendency had disintegrated into three or four little grouplets. That Daniel was down to four or five people and that the group led by Bernardo was inactive. (At this point I asked him if he had spoken to Bernardo. He said no. So his opinion was based on discussions with Combatiente, Ignacio, and Daniel.)

He said the MO people had a line of work. That they had between 30 and 50 people and some people in some factories. That they had made modest gains and were doing important high school work. He reported that there are two tendencies around the question of their work with Ongaro. One led by Valencia wants to do "the old type of trade-union work." The others reject this. (The truth is that Valencia wrote a document calling the MO line on trade-union work ultraleft and proving his case quite well.)

Livio explained that he had had some criticisms of the PRT Combatiente. But he had discovered that his criticisms were unjust. He had thought they were for rural guerrilla warfare and that the key proletariat was in Tucuman among the sugar workers. This was the line of a thick document which he thought had been passed by their fifth congress. As it turned out this document was simply the contribution of one member of the CC and not the key leader, Carlos. In fact the line passed at the fifth congress was just fine and thus the misunderstanding is now all cleared up.

They decided by a big majority to stay in the Fourth International. At the fifth congress there were two lines. One for rural guerrilla warfare and one for urban guerrilla warfare. The urban people beat the rural people. And they voted to carry out actions connected to the mass movement. Concretely, they are doing four things:

1. They expropriate banks "in the traditions of the Bolshevik party." (I interrupted and said that this was like cursing in church.)

2. They expropriate arms and medical supplies. Apparently they cleaned out a hospital recently and have lots of medicine.

3. They expropriate and deliver food in the barrios.

4. They pull off actions where there are working-class struggles, the most famous being the FIAT factory where they disarmed the guards and spoke to the workers.

Results of their work. Made fantastic armed propoganda. Huge articles in all the papers. They have definitely won the sympathy of the people. One of the proofs is their food distributions which could not be carried out unless they had the sympathy of the masses.

Livio elaborated on the popular support explaining that when the police came after them and asked the people which way they had gone the people said, "They went that-a-way."

They concentrate their actions where they already have people who have penetrated the mass movement. They have connections with the working-class movement. Livio said he personally had met and seen with his own eyes four such worker leaders.

Then the meeting (United Secretariat meeting) hit its high point. But the interest was not quite as great as one would expect because apparently everyone had heard the report except Ross, Alan and myself. Through much of this, Ernest was reading a newspaper.

The high point was Livio's descriptions of the popularity of the ERP. He described how at a mass meeting of workers in the streets of Cordoba when the flag of the ERP appeared the masses began to cheer, and broke out in stormy applause. Also 4,000 marched on the prison where ERP prisoners are. The prisoners spoke to the crowd through the prison windows and the masses cheered the ERP. Then Livio told the story of the mother of a worker who died during the strike battles in Cordoba. When her son was being buried at a mass funeral, she insisted that the coffin be draped by the flag of the ERP. Livio insisted on his claim that the ERP is in no way isolated from the masses.

However he said we must make a difference between actual links and support. He said they are gaining ground. And have now real connections.

In other words, to sum up: Things are going great in Argentina. The ERP is doing fantastic; the masses support us; and it all confirms our line. As Livio says, the Combatiente is "carrying out the line of the ninth world congress."

Livio mentioned that we did have some problems however. One is that Combatiente does not have sufficient information about Maoism. After discussing with them however, Livio discovered that there really is agreement and that they are very open-minded. And actually Combatiente agrees with the Vietnamese more than the Chinese. In any case this is a point we will have to discuss further with them. (I asked for clarification at this point. I said we are for the overthrow of Mao; are the Combatiente for the overthrow of Mao or do they give him critical support?)

Livio had no answer.

He suggested the International should have more contact with them and send them more material. He gave no indication whether they had asked him for reinforcements and whether he had agreed or not.

After Livio's report I asked for a change in the agenda. That we first discuss Argentina before we go on to anything else and that I give a counterreport. This was agreed to. Also I asked Livio who was Domingo, he said he was Domingo.

First thing I did was ask Livio if we could correctly interpret his report to mean that he believes the Combatiente group is carrying out a correct line, that he agrees with them. He said, yes. They are basically correct. He made no qualifying statement and no one at all seemed to object.

I gave a report on the Combatiente. My report showed how Livio had twisted facts such as pointing out that the majority of delegates at the fifth congress were opposed to staying in the International but that the leadership had convinced them to stay; also the fact that their concept of mass work is to build secret clandestine cells in the factories and in fact they have no line for trade-union work.

I referred to Combatiente as a terrorist group and stated that the support for their line is further confirmation that the ninth world congress was an adaptation to ultraleftism and that Livio's report went even further. I pointed out that the Combatiente line is a total rejection of Trotskyism and Leninism.

Then I gave a report on the Verdad group and a little bit on the MO and TC tendencies.

After my report Jean Pierre was asked to add anything he wanted since he also went to Argentina. Both Livio and Jean Pierre did not bother to see the Verdad group at all.

Jean Pierre began by stating that everything he saw and found out confirmed Livio's report. He completely solidarized himself with Livio and the Combatiente group. It became completely clear that they are all in agreement with the new turn of total and uncritical support to Combatiente. Like Livio, Jean Pierre also said that after talking to the Combatiente people he realized that they were actually in agreement. (Again I asked him the question I asked Livio and again he had no answer.)

After Jean Pierre's report we had questions. Ernest asked a ten-minute question which was a diatribe against Moreno. He claimed that Moreno is really closer to the majority than the minority but that he is a hypocrite in that he does not carry out any armed struggle. His question was what is Verdad doing

with all their trade-union work. I explained they were trying to build a class-struggle left wing. They all tended to laugh at that. Gisela, I think, said that Verdad does not include the entire transitional program in the program of their trade-union tendency. She was a little surprised when I said of course not. That the purpose of a trade-union tendency is not to mechanically adopt our program -- anyway no one really cared. They were just thinking of something to say.

In his summary, Livio said he had explained to Combatiente about Peng; how no one supports him and that they were satisfied about that. In explaining why he did not see Verdad he mentioned Moreno's personal attitude and the Verdad fifth congress atrocity story. He also tried to justify the public attacks made by the Combatiente group against Moreno. When I had reminded them that we had made an agreement at the world congress that neither group would make public attacks against the other and that Moreno had lived up to his part of the agreement but not Combatiente Livio twisted the agreement. He said that political attacks were okay, that the attacks have all been political.

This ends the discussion on Argentina.

During the Sunday session I had a private lunch with Mandel at his request. During our lunch he raised several interesting questions that indicate where their thinking is going.

They were the following:

1. We (the SWP) are not giving our share of money and they will change the statutes at the next world congress to prevent us from doing what we are doing. (I told him I considered what he said a slanderous attack on the SWP and that in fact the IP expenditures, etc., are very large. I gave the example of my trips to Latin America, etc.)

2. We are going along with the breaking of discipline in England. Specifically the women's liberation business. And that shows a disregard by us on the general question of democratic centralism which is becoming a big problem. (I told him I knew nothing about England and that he would have to talk to Joe and Barry on that but that I suspect he was wrong and that in any case we are very interested in this question of democratic centralism as it regards the International. That Jack was writing a letter to Krivine asking the League to explain their views since we get a feeling that they have some sort of special centralist concept of the International which they have never written down.)

3. That we shouldn't use the term ultraleft because this will force the others to call us right opportunists. (I said fine, let them if they believe that.)

4. He said the center will soon be moved to Frankfurt because he got a very high-paying job as a professor in Germany.