

March 14, 1973

To the PC

Dear Comrades:

More than a year and a half ago I asked that the PC be given a financial picture. Some promises and quasi-promises were given. I trust nobody will accuse me of being hasty because I have concluded that the request has been denied in fact, although without the courtesy of telling me so.

One of the reasons I made the request was so that I would be better able to judge whether or not to make some modest proposals requiring the expenditure of additional time or personnel. I have no choice now but to make some of these proposals even though I lack the information I would prefer to have first.

My proposal now is that we should change the kind of minutes we keep and publish, and replace the present utterly worthless type with the kind that presents a summary of the discussions held and reports given. This change would have a healthy effect on the relations between the PC and NC, and I think would benefit the work and political level of both committees. For a change we might begin to get some political responses from NC members other than the occasional letter we get from Milt Alvin.

Is there any valid reason, other than inertia, for us to continue putting out the kind of minutes we now produce? I cannot think of any. Whatever the reasons for doing them this way were in the past, I don't think they apply any more now. Security is certainly not a good reason; today's technology enables the FBI, I am sure, to get a much better quality tape of our meetings than the ones we have to listen to when we miss PC meetings.

Is a summary-type minutes feasible with our present forces? I think so. What it requires is having one member present with a tape who could do the summarizing on a typewriter afterward. The first few times it might be difficult, but once the comrade got the hang of it and relaxed, it would not be a major task. (So I am not asking for the assignment of a comrade to this as a fulltime task.) Naturally not every member of the PC would think that his or her thoughts had been done justice by the summarizer; to cover this, a note should always accompany the minutes saying that the summaries have not been checked by the participants; and if a genuine mistake is ever made, comrades could insert a correction-note in the next set of minutes.

My proposal applies to PC minutes only. But if it works, we might want to extend them to plenum and convention minutes. The relatively poor Russian party used to produce that kind of minutes for congresses long before 1917.

Of course things that we want to continue keeping obscure, like the international reports, could continue as is.

I hope this proposal can be acted on soon.

Comradely,

George Breitman

To the PC

3/26/73

MAR 27 1973

Dear Comrades:

Attached is a copy of the minutes of the founding conference of the FI. (I don't think it is necessary that you make a copy for each member (it will appear in print sooner or later); it should suffice to show it to those members who are interested.)

It is submitted as an exhibit for the PC meeting that will discuss the proposal for more useful minutes. It is only an exhibit, not a model, because it could be improved in many ways. But it serves a purpose because it shows how to meet some objections to the proposal I made. One way it does it is by designating who took the minutes, and putting the responsibility therefore on that one person. The secretary then has the right to condense quite freely. If somebody talks without adding anything, it can be said that X agreed with Jones, etc., without repeating everything X said. (This can meet the objection that taking fuller minutes can inspire members to talk for the record, knowing that their prose is about to become deathless.)

There were 22 people present at this conference, which is only a little more than the attendance at our meetings. The conference was supposed to last from 9:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.; when it actually adjourned was not noted down, but that is considerably longer than our average long PC meeting. I mention these comparative figures because these minutes managed to get the main points down in less than 16 or so letter-size pages. So surely the minutes of one of our meetings could be a lot less than that.

Comradely,

George Breitman

MINUTES OF THE

WORLD CONGRESS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Held at Lausanne on Saturday 3rd September 1938.

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The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m.

Comrades Hic, Gould and Sumner were appointed secretaries.

Comrade Naville, in a preliminary statement, said that there were representatives present from eleven countries, namely: America, England, France, Belgium, Holland, Poland, Greece, Italy, Germany, Russia, and Brazil; in addition, certain delegates held mandates from Spain, Czechoslovakia, Canada and Mexico. In view of the illegal circumstances under which the Congress was being held, the International Secretariat had decided to divide the work in such a way that the full Congress would have to meet on one day only. There had already been a series of preliminary Commissions to deal with the various national questions, and these would report to the Congress. Today there was the Plenary Assembly which it was hoped to bring to an end by 10 p.m. that evening. In addition there would, if necessary, be supplementary Commissions.

The Agenda proposed by the I.S. for the Plenary Session was as follows:

- I. Report of the International Secretariat since the Geneva Conference in July 1936.
- II. Discussion of the Draft of the Transitional Programme: a) the Trade Union questions; b) the Russian question; c) the questions of Spain, War, etc.
- III. Resolution on the Sino-Japanese War.
- IV. Resolution on the Role of American Imperialism.
- V. Statutes of the Fourth International, including the question of proclaiming the International.
- VI. Reports of the Preliminary Commissions.

Comrade Boitel: considered that the proposed arrangements for the Plenary Assembly allowed too little time for discussion of important matters.

Naville: pointed out that in existing circumstances it would in practice be impossible to have any further sessions of the Plenary Assembly.

Lebrun: proposed that the present session be prolonged until midnight.

After some further discussion, it was agreed that the proposals of the I.S. be accepted, with the possibility of reconsidering the question later if necessary.

Comrade Shachtman was elected President.

Comrades Leon Sedov, Erwin Wolf, and Rudolph Klement were elected Honorary Presidents.

3/17/73

To the PC

Dear Comrades:

When I listened to the tape of the PC discussion about the CP last month, I thought I heard Doug say something about the Stalinists and the Guardianites being engaged in a competition over members of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party. (I can't be certain because the tape was not at its best at that point, or he was mumbling.)

Anyhow, hearing that or thinking I heard it reminded me that at the last plenum, some ten months ago, Barry assured the NC that although we weren't going to be able to discuss the then recent formation of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party at the plenum, such a discussion would be held in the PC soon after the plenum. The discussion was never held, nor, so far as I know, was any explanation ever given as to why the discussion was not held. The Militant has had very little if anything about the PRSP, or about Puerto Rico in general; which leads me to the belief that not even informal discussions were held on the subject.

Internationalism, which is now held in such high esteem, is supposed to begin at home, as I understand it. Puerto Rico is certainly an at-home question for the U.S., and the headquarters of the SWP is in the city with the largest Puerto Rican population in the world. Do you think we will make a serious breakthrough among Puerto Rican radicals until the SWP leadership begins to show as much interest, ~~in~~ politically and organizationally, as it did in Chicane radicals?

Comradely,

George Breitman