

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES, Number 28, June 7, 1971

Present: Barnes, Boehm, Breitman, Britton, Dobbs, A. Hansen,
J. Hansen, Horowitz, Lovell, Stone, Waters

Visitors: Bolduc, Camejo, Jones, Seigle

Chairman: Dobbs

AGENDA: 1. Fort Greely GI Case
 2. Antiwar Director
 3. World Movement

1. FORT GREELY GI CASE

Seigle reported.

2. ANTIWAR DIRECTOR

Barnes reported.

Motion: That John Benson be designated national
antiwar director.

Carried.

3. WORLD MOVEMENT

J. Hansen and Waters reported. (see attached)

Discussion.

Meeting adjourned.

COPY OF TRANSLATION OF MAY 16 LETTER FROM COMRADE STEIN
FOR INFORMATION OF POLITICAL COMMITTEE ONLY

LIGUE COMMUNISTE
section française de la IVE internationale
95, rue du faubourg st-martin, paris 10e

Attention Cde. J. Hansen

To the National Leadership of the Socialist Workers Party

copies to: The United Secretariat
The Political Bureau of the Ligue Communiste (SFQI)

Paris, May 16, 1971

Dear Comrades,

I am writing you this letter as a Brazilian militant, a member of the Fourth International, working with various other Brazilian comrades under the guidance and control of the United Secretariat toward the construction of a section of the Fourth International in Brazil.

This letter, concerning the publication by Intercontinental Press in its March 29, 1971, issue of a document entitled "Concerning a Kidnapping in Brazil" was already being written when we learned of the publication of the same document in the International Socialist Review through an article reviewing it in the April 30, 1971, Militant. These new developments call for some supplementary remarks, which will be made further on. In brief, we consider it very regrettable that after a long period without anything being published on Brazil by the comrades such a document should be circulated. This leads us to pose a question of principle with you.

Let us commence then with what seems to us to be the most important. The question of principle concerns the article on Brazil that we sent to Intercontinental Press last March 8. The article, entitled "Brazil: seven years of military dictatorship," with a first part on "Torture and 'Economic Miracle'" and a second part on "The Revolutionary Left," was written by two Brazilian militants, members of the Fourth International. This article was published in the March and May 1971 issues of the magazine Quatrième Internationale. I admit that I am ignorant of what the group Ponto de Partida, which authored the article "Concerning a Kidnapping in Brazil," represents politically. But one thing is certain -- this group does not belong to the Fourth International and no one has ever heard of it before. Can one therefore ask why Intercontinental Press published the long declaration of this group and not a document written by members of the Fourth International, of whom one can think that they "express the standpoint of revolutionary Marxism" that Intercontinental Press is presumed to present and defend in the first place? The two authors of the document are myself on the one hand (whom both Comrade Jack Barnes and Comrade

Pete Camejo have met on their trips here) and another Brazilian comrade who joined the International several months ago after a report made about him at the United Secretariat. The document introduces the analysis that I developed during a report made at the United Secretariat after I spent three months in Brazil in 1970 contacting revolutionary organizations and defending the program and perspectives of the International. So far as I know, no other contradictory analysis on the political conjuncture or on the situation in the revolutionary left in Brazil has been made by members of the Fourth International. As you know, we have no section in Brazil. This article expresses the point of view of Brazilian Trotskyist militants immersed in political work in their country. The decision of Intercontinental Press not to publish it and to publish instead the document of Ponto de Partida thus seems absolutely incomprehensible to me and I fail to see the political reasons for it. Consequently I believe that a statement or a rectification on this point is required.

But I could not write you this letter without utilizing the occasion to inform you of the estimate that we must make as Brazilian revolutionary militants on the document in question by Ponto de Partida. This discourse of a philosophy student is in fact hard for anyone to swallow who has experienced the conditions of revolutionary struggle in Brazil under the military dictatorship. It is obvious that the most prominent revolutionary organizations in Brazil can and must be criticized from a revolutionary Marxist point of view. But the entire reasoning of the Ponto de Partida document is based on the argument that the kidnappings produce a more intensive repression. This is an argument in the purest Social Democratic style, holding that it is the action of the revolutionists that is responsible for the repression by the ruling classes. It is a shameful Social Democratic position -- it is lamentable to see this published in the Trotskyist press. Trotskyism has already suffered sufficiently from Posadism in Brazil to let this type of stuff go by. The other criticisms in the document concerning the kidnappings are totally abstract. The author seems not to be aware that the principal aim of the kidnappings is to free political prisoners from the jails of the dictatorship. It is a pure and simple abstraction to say in the concrete situation of total demobilization in Brazil that mass pressure is required to liberate them, if not a word is said on how it would be possible to reconstitute a mass movement able to gain even partial victories without becoming the target of the machine guns of the dictatorship. On this the document is silent. Thus Ponto de Partida, of which no one has ever heard, sets out to give lessons in a way that can never influence a single Brazilian militant. And what self-complacency, what presumption to seek to judge what is Marxist and what is not. The author attacks in a gratuitous manner (a chapter devoted to it) Comrade Ruy Mauro Marini, one of the most eminent Latin American Marxists (Comrade Ernest Mandel, who knows his contributions well, would be entirely in agreement on that). Precisely in this passage, the author of the document, so expert in Marxism, finds that it

is absurd to speak of Brazil being subordinated to the USA, to the Federal Republic of Germany, to Japan, and to Switzerland. Marxism recognizes only "interdependencies" among the different parts of the capitalist world. If the author of the document knew anything about Marxism, he would be aware of what imperialism is, the highest stage of capitalism. If he knew anything about Brazil, he would be aware that these four countries are among those in the forefront of the imperialist penetration there. If the relations flowing from that are not of subordination, I admit not being up to date on this new "contribution" to Marxism. This document has meaning only for inactive, gossip-mongering students of philosophy, who prefer to carry on their studies abroad. From an armchair there it is easy to give lessons. But on the concrete problems facing the Brazilian vanguard, not a word is said. Before treating in such a cavalier way the revolutionary militants who are struggling against the dictatorship, Ponto de Partida should show its capacity to advance concrete perspectives and to reply to the numerous questions posed by militants from every side. Because if you want to speak for the political vanguard, the capacity is needed to state in what way it should intervene. Thus it is not sufficient to cite as an example the victorious FIAT strike in Córdoba, Argentina. What is required is to state what this strike implies from the point of view of the organization and of its armed defense for example -- the plant was literally encircled with various explosives and other arms. And Ponto de Partida forgot to speak about the intervention of the political vanguard there, which was the subject it began with. That's unfortunate, because precisely in this exact case, those involved were our comrades of the Revolutionary Army of the People (ERP), the armed organization created and led by the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), Argentine section of the Fourth International, who are capable of making a criticism on the political level and on the practical terrain of the deviations that certain Latin American organizations can commit in their armed actions. To do that, they have no need of utilizing old Social Democratic arguments nor of giving lessons. They are also certainly much more effective in their criticisms.

As for the article published in The Militant, I think that it is regrettable that an American Trotskyist journal, that claims to be consistently internationalist, publishes nothing on Brazil except an article disavowing the kidnapping of ambassadors, including...an American. It is regrettable to see The Militant finding itself very far in the rear of the very bourgeois-capitalist New York Times in denouncing the repression and torture in Brazil, but ahead of it with regard to condemning the acts of revolutionary militants.

Finally I will make a last remark on a detail, but one that nevertheless appears important to me, concerning the article of Comrade Peter Camejo in The Militant. He says: "The Tupamaros...asserted that in 'other countries' (not Uruguay) it is possible to 'achieve a revolution' by means of elections." The Tupamaros never said that, comrades. According to the Intercontinental Press of March 1, 1971, they declared: "We do not honestly believe that we can achieve a revolution in Uruguay today by means of elections. It is incorrect to

transpose the experiences of other countries." Quotation marks must not be played with Comrade Camejo. The article in The Militant contains an improper interpretation. The Trotskyists have suffered sufficiently in the past from this type of procedure to make it a duty to refrain from utilizing it against others. Moreover, the declaration of the Tupamaros is sufficiently clear and explicit. To say merely that they support the Popular Front without citing their political considerations and their statement: "regrets, however, that this closing of ranks came specifically for the elections and not before" could lead to confusion.

To return to the principal point of my letter and in view of the question of principle that I have raised, we would ask that the article on Brazil which we sent last March 8 be published in Intercontinental Press. I would likewise ask that this letter be published in the Internal Bulletin.

Trotskyist greetings,
Stein

COPY OF JUNE 1 REPLY TO COMRADE STEIN

FOR INFORMATION OF POLITICAL COMMITTEE ONLY

Intercontinental Press
P.O. Box 116
Village P.O. Station
New York, N.Y. 10014

June 1, 1971

Ligue Communiste
Paris, France

Attention: Stein

Dear Comrade Stein,

This will acknowledge your letter dated May 16, 1971, which we received May 27. I am transmitting it to the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party in accordance with the way you have addressed it.

At this point, as editor of Intercontinental Press, I should like to take up only one question raised by your letter. You state that Intercontinental Press made a decision not to publish the article which you dated as having been written last January and which you included with a letter to us dated March 8. However, we placed it on our agenda along with other articles that we have received from various comrades, for translation and publication.

You state further: "The article, entitled 'Brazil: seven years of military dictatorship,' with a first part on 'Torture and "Economic Miracle"' and a second part on 'The Revolutionary Left,' was written by two Brazilian militants, members of the Fourth International. This article was published in the March and May 1971 issues of the magazine Quatrième Internationale."

We received the March issue of Quatrième Internationale -- I am not sure now whether it was the latter part of April or beginning of May -- and saw that the first part of your article was included in that issue. As yet we have not received the May issue of Quatrième Internationale. But since your letter, dated May 17, affirms that the second part of your article was published in it, we can only assume that through some slipup the comrades failed to send us a copy.

Consequently I would greatly appreciate it if you would airmail a copy of that issue to us by return post.

In view of the importance of your article as an expression of majority opinion on the situation in Brazil, I think it advisable to make sure that the English translation conforms as closely as possible to what is published in Quatrième

Internationale, thereby taking into account any modification that may have been introduced into the original manuscript by the comrades in charge of editing the material that appears in its pages.

Comradely yours,

s/Joseph Hansen

Editor, Intercontinental Press

cc: United Secretariat
Political Bureau of the Ligue Communiste
Political Committee, Socialist Workers Party
Editor, Quatrième Internationale

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IMG.,
182 Pentonville Rd.,
London N.1.
Britain.
6/5/71

Jack Barnes,
SWP.,
14 Charles Lane,
New York City,
N.Y. 10014
USA.

Dear Jack,

Your letter of the 30th ult., received yesterday, acknowledged.

We did, indeed, receive your communication of February 8th. We sent you on March 10th an acknowledgement and the text of a resolution passed by the IMG National Committee on March 7th. The resolution reads:

"(1) That our reply should be more in sorrow than anger, regretting very much that relations between the SWP and the IMG have declined;

(2) That we suggest some measures to improve matters, e.g., more exchange of materials and informal discussions. A start could be made by exchanging minutes and for the two organisations to send each other all documents, circulars, etc.;

(3) We have to insist that a correction on questions of fact is sent to all those people who received Joe Hansen's memoranda;

(4) We have to protest against the way that the IMG was tried and found guilty of undemocratic procedures (and a general question of democracy in the IMG was raised) without any chance to defend itself (nor for that matter even knowing that such charges were going to be raised)."

Passed 14 for, 2 against 1 abstention (on the grounds that the letter was not strong enough).

Another minute is of interest:

"Asked whether she would deny the fact that IMG paid £192 for the books received from Pioneer Books, Williams answered negatively." I have not drafted the above mentioned reply because of pressure of work due to the IMG annual conference.

Please let us have your reaction to the suggestion of the exchange of more material. At present we receive SWP branch circulars and a host of material from the YSA. We do not receive SWP national committee minutes nor those of your political bureau and similar committees. Please instruct us on matters of security, etc., we remember full well Joe's violent reaction on the occasion of some material being sent to the wrong address.

Please arrange to have sent to us by airmail one each of your Discussion Bulletins, we already receive the Information Bulletins. Please inform comrade Judy White that we have paid £40 to Martine for International Information Bulletins, this negates the invoice she sent us. We are selling the Bulletins and our practice will be to pay this money to Martine, about every other month. This is in keeping with a decision of our Political Committee. We realise full well that payment for SWP Discussion Bulletins should be made to the SWP -- we hope that this will clear up any confusion on this matter.

We have received from the Spartacists a request to advertise the issue of their paper giving a "report" on the differences in the United Secretariat. In view of the lying and dishonest nature of that report we are not proposing to print the advert.

We have sent to you under separate cover a copy of our pamphlet on Bengal -- we hope you can find it useful.

Since your move there has been some material sent to us at our old address (1, Toynbee St., London, E.1.). It would appear that this mistake has been discovered because the mail stopped being re-directed from that address as mysteriously as it commenced -- however, you might care to mention it to who ever is in charge. Re-directed mail is a convenient way for the cops to get a set of our material.

Revolutionary greetings,

s/Pat Jordan

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14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

May 15, 1971

Dear Pat,

Thank you for your letter of May 6. I received it yesterday. We never received your letter of March 10.

I will circulate your letter to the Political Committee and we will await the reply to our communication of February 8 that you are working on. I can appreciate the pressure of work due to the IMG annual conference. We have the same problem mounting here now ourselves.

We will try to increase the exchange of material that you suggest. It would be a help if we had a more exact idea what you already receive. We will begin immediately sending you an airmail copy of our internal discussion bulletins as they come off the press. It would be very helpful if you would do the same. We do not have a set of the preconference discussion material of the IMG that is now coming out.

There are no special problems with security. If I remember correctly, Joe's "violent" reaction had to do with material for the SWP being addressed as such to ICP's box number. There's no problem with sending any of the material you want directly to the SWP at 14 Charles Lane.

We're surprised that any material was sent to your old address at Toynbee St. The comrades from the national office and the offices of our publications have not done so. They have sent all the material to Pentonville Rd. Would you please send us a list of all the material that came to 1 Toynbee St. and the date that it was mailed, if you can make out the postmark. That's the only way we can actually track down the error.

The Political Committee is planning to send a representative to observe your conference. He will be able to clarify any remaining triangular problems of bulletin bills that exist between ourselves, yourselves and Martine.

Comradely,
s/Jack Barnes