

POLITICAL BUREAU

NUMBER 20

January 2, 1975

Present: Barnes, A. Hansen, Horowitz, Thomas, Waters

Visitors: J. Hansen, Lund

AGENDA: 1. World Movement  
2. Rouge Article on Boston

1. WORLD MOVEMENT

Waters reported.

Discussion

Motion: To adopt letter to International Control Commission  
(see attached).

Carried.

Motion: To release today the public statement on the OCI-FI  
discussions adopted at December 23 Political Bureau meeting  
(see attached).

Carried.

2. ROUGE ARTICLE ON BOSTON

Lund reported on an article on Boston in the Nov. 29 issue  
of Rouge.

Discussion

Motion: To request Rouge to run article drafted by Lund on  
Boston.

Carried.

MEETING ADJOURNED

COPY

New York  
January 2, 1975

To the Members of the International Control Commission (Bundy, Eduard, Gormley, Hoffman, Lars, Tantalus)

Dear Comrades,

We would like to call your attention to the conduct of one of the members of the International Control Commission, Comrade Hoffmann, during the recent convention of the Front Communiste Revolutionnaire in France.

The convention was held December 19-22, while a delegated subcommittee of four other members of the ICC were in New York, beginning the investigation of the circumstances surrounding the split of the Internationalist Tendency from the Socialist Workers Party.

Comrade Hoffmann was the reporter for Tendency 3 on the organization report at the FCR convention. In his summary remarks, he informed the convention that the internal situation in the SWP was still under investigation by the International Control Commission so he could not give the delegates a conclusive report on its findings. However, he continued, he wanted to make a few remarks.

He proceeded to tell the convention that all members of the ICC, including those nominated to the ICC by the international minority, were in agreement that it was false to say the Internationalist Tendency had split from the Socialist Workers Party. On the contrary, Hoffmann asserted, the Control Commission of the SWP had been brutally assembled to force out the IT. He implied that something irregular had been done when the SWP National Committee named one of its members to the Control Commission (although this is required according to the statutes of the SWP).

Comrade Hoffmann went on to comment that the ICC had established at its first meeting that the SWP leadership based its decisions on the material published in the special internal bulletin called "Materials Related to the Split of the Internationalist Tendency from the Socialist Workers Party" [Internal Information Bulletin No. 6 in 1974]. He offered his opinion that the published material was in no way sufficient to justify the conclusions reached by the SWP Control Commission or Political Committee. In fact, he said, the bulletin proves exactly the opposite, since it contains the text of a letter written by a leader of the IT warning about the split course of the international minority.

Comrade Hoffmann concluded by telling those delegates who had expressed concern about the deepening divisions in the international to address themselves not to the international majority, but to the minority, whom he held responsible for splitting actions such as those taken against the Internationalist Tendency.

The following day Comrade Hoffmann introduced into the record of the convention a statement that while his references to the proceedings of the International Control Commission may have been inappropriate, he wanted to insist on the opinions he

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expressed concerning the substance of the matter.

The conduct of Comrade Hoffmann during the FCR convention clearly demonstrated that far from being willing to suspend judgment pending investigation of the facts so that the Control Commission could determine the truth and place it before the IEC, he had already made up his mind before the investigation even began.

His comments to the FCR convention concerning an investigation currently underway, in which he had only marginally participated, compromise that entire body of which he is an elected member.

In addition, his remarks were clearly designed to prejudice the opinions of a significant section of members of the Fourth International even before the Control Commission makes its report and before these members are able to read any of the abundant documentation concerning this question.

The only way to prevent Comrade Hoffman's actions from totally compromising the moral authority of any report eventually made by the International Control Commission is for him to immediately disqualify himself from further participation in this particular investigation.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice Waters  
for the SWP Political Committee

cc: United Secretariat  
Central Committee of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire

(original sent on SWP letterhead)

January 2, 1974

United Secretariat

Dear Comrades,

I am enclosing a public statement issued by the Political Bureau of the Socialist Workers Party that is self-explanatory.

Copies have been sent to Intercontinental Press, Inprecor, Rouge, and Informations Ouvrières.

Comradely yours,

Jack Barnes  
National Secretary

cc: Intercontinental Press  
Inprecor  
Rouge  
Informations Ouvrières

COPY

New York  
January 3, 1975

Dear Ernest,

Under separate cover we've sent double copies of several additional documents that the O.C.I. gave me when I was last in Paris. As Joe mentioned to you, I went by their headquarters to deliver the documents decided on by the United Secretariat.

Our xerox machine has been broken for a week, or these would have been sent off sooner. The second set of copies is for the LCR leadership.

Of particular interest are 1) the two items related to the recent split in the Healy organization; 2) the translation of a document from the POR-Lora; and 3) a rough draft of the political resolution being discussed at the O.C.I. European conference this weekend.

François D. indicated that they would be sending us an additional package of stuff. Since I didn't give them much advance notice that I was going to drop by with the material from the United Secretariat they did not have time to prepare a larger package for us.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice

## On the OCI's Proposal to Discuss Differences

[The following statement was released by the Political Bureau of the Socialist Workers Party on January 2, 1975.]

On October 15, 1974, a meeting was held between representatives of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and representatives of the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste. Observers of the Socialist Workers Party were present. The purpose of the meeting was to hear proposals made by the OCI to engage in a discussion of their differences with the United Secretariat.

The initiative in this move was taken by the leaders of the OCI. In May 1973 they wrote to the United Secretariat proposing that they be permitted to participate in the discussion then going on in the Fourth International. Because of the hostile way in which it was presented, the proposal appeared to be merely a factional maneuver and it was rejected.

The OCI leaders repeated their advance in a much more comradely way in October 1973. The United Secretariat decided to respond in kind, informing the OCI that while their proposal could not be accepted at the moment it could be reconsidered at a later time. Unfortunately, in the pressure of preparations for a world congress, the letter was not sent.

In September 1974 the OCI again took the initiative. This time, however, the OCI leaders did not go first to the United Secretariat but to the Socialist Workers Party. One of their representatives engaged in literary work in the United States became involved in private discussions with various members of the SWP. They pressed him on some of the issues that have kept the OCI separated from the Trotskyist movement as a whole.

Later the OCI representative asked for a meeting with the leadership of the SWP. This was granted, and two leaders of the SWP met with him. He said that the OCI was still interested in opening a discussion with the United Secretariat, but if this proved to be impossible, the OCI would like to invite the SWP to hold such a discussion.

The SWP representatives said that it would be incorrect for the SWP to act unilaterally in such a matter. They did agree, however, to pass the OCI's request on to the United Secretariat.

The United Secretariat, after considering the question, decided to hear the proposals of the OCI and to explore the possibility of ameliorating relations. A first step in this direction could be the exchange of internal bulletins.

Practical arrangements were made and the meeting was held. The OCI representatives outlined their proposals and explained their motivation. Some preliminary statements were made concerning the differences. A possible framework for probing the differences and trying to ameliorate relations was discussed. No agreement was reached beyond such minimal steps as exchanging internal bulletins. The participants then reported back.

A copy of the internal report made by the OCI representatives to the top leadership of their organization happened to fall into the

hands of one of the ultraleft sects in the United States, which immediately published it along with a provocative attack accusing the OCI of "capitulation" to the United Secretariat.

Some of the things said in the internal report were interpreted by others as indicating bad faith on the part of the OCI leaders in their approach to the United Secretariat.

Certain formulations in the internal report lend themselves to misinterpretation, it appears to us. They could be taken as indicating a hope of making immediate gains by maneuvering in the internal discussion that has been going on in the Fourth International for the past five years. However, one is led to an opposite conclusion if the internal report is considered as a whole and viewed in the more general context of the development of all the organizations claiming adherence to Trotskyism.

From this angle, the internal report tends to confirm the sincerity of the OCI leaders. As we see it, they are neither capitulating nor trying to carry out a raid. The OCI leaders, we think, have reached the conclusion that the Fourth International is discussing questions of prime importance to the revolutionary-socialist movement. In a debate of that depth they feel that their views as serious revolutionists ought to be taken into consideration.

While they hold firm positions, which they intend to defend vigorously, they are prepared to modify them in the face of compelling arguments and draw the requisite practical conclusions. They expect that the organizations adhering to the United Secretariat, or in sympathy with its general aims, will display similar good faith.

The willingness of the OCI leaders to engage in the give and take of a free discussion is a favorable development, in our opinion. It promises to open the way to a fruitful dialogue.

Nevertheless, an obstacle still stands in the way. Some of the public characterizations used by the OCI in the past with regard to members of the United Secretariat, particularly leaders of the Front Communiste Révolutionnaire in France, were excessive, in our view. If they were to be echoed now, it would be hard to avoid concluding that the OCI is engaging in a short-term maneuver rather than moving toward a basic discussion with an open mind.

An example is to be found in Informations Ouvrières No. 679 (November 14-20, 1974). One of the leaders of the United Secretariat is called a "sycophant" and is accused of having written "perfidiously" eighteen years ago with regard to the proletarian uprising in Hungary. (The record of the comrade in question is absolutely clear on the decisive question--complete support of the incipient political revolution and opposition to Moscow's repressive intervention.)

We think that such characterizations are out of order. We consider them to be hangovers from past factional positions that demand reexamination if a serious discussion is to be undertaken. Particularly important is the question of accuracy and objectivity in considering the positions held by different individuals and tendencies at the time.

The issues in those factional battles and who turned out to be correct historically can be debated without the use of epithets. To let disparaging labels stand in the way of a comradely discussion of current differences (however much the current differences may be related in the final analysis to past positions) would be a political mistake, in our opinion.

It would be excellent if the OCI would again take the initiative and clarify this question in an unmistakable way.

We hope that the OCI will do its part to eliminate such obstacles and thereby help clear the way for a comradely discussion of current and past differences. Without such a discussion, it is hardly possible in this instance to reach a point where a principled basis can be found for closer fraternal relations and the kind of comradely collaboration that would give the Fourth International a new impulse forward.

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December 9, 1974

Dear Joe,

Thank you for your letter of November 29 and the Workers Vanguard issue enclosed. I hadn't seen the Workers Vanguard, but I had indeed seen the Lambert circular letter, which the French "section" of the Spartacists had distributed widely at an FCR meeting in Paris.

I find your comments more interesting than the Robertson article itself, which is just the latest variation of the theme that they are the "only consistent" opponents of "pabloism". Incidentally, do you know that there exists a "Fifth International", which is supposed to call itself "the single greatest threat to the Spartacists"?

The Lambert circular letter includes at least one blatant falsification: the statement that this meeting was called by the SWP (on the request of the SWP) and not on the request of the Lambertists themselves. This is a minor matter, but it does not appear promising as to assessing their good faith. In addition it contains the allegation that prior to the meeting, and independently of the Broue meeting in New York, there was a meeting between the SWP and the Lambertists. I wondered why you didn't comment on this allegation in your letter. Perhaps you'll return to it during our next meeting.

Please try and come here the 15th already, because, as I wrote Jack, I'll be busy on the 16th evening, so we should meet the 16th in the afternoon, and you should be over your jet-lag then.

Fraternally yours,

Ernest

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December 22, 1974

Dear Ernest,

Your letter of December 9 was not delivered until December 16, which, of course, was after we had left for Brussels. So I did not see it until I returned to New York.

No. I didn't know about the formation of a "Fifth International" dedicated to becoming "the single greatest threat to the Spartacists." The Fifth International seems to merit being placed on the list I keep of ultraleft sects to be followed for enlightenment, instruction, and entertainment. How do I go about getting on their mailing list?

On the Lambert internal letter, I don't think the formulation you mention is actually a "blatant falsification." After all, since it was not intended for publication, the document is written loosely for an "in group" that automatically fits seemingly obscure references into the frame of previous internal communications and decisions. The formulation in question is that the meeting "was held at the request of the SWP leadership." But all of the OCI leaders to whom the letter was sent know that the OCI took the initiative as early as May 1973 in accordance with a decision they must have participated in making (whether they were for or against). And all of them know that the initiative was renewed in October 1973.

In those two instances, the OCI addressed the United Secretariat directly. After not getting a reply to the initiative of October 1973, the OCI tried again about a year later, this time turning to the SWP. The SWP referred the matter to the United Secretariat (which is what we told Broue we would do). It appears to me that this is what the author of the document was talking about when he said "at the request" of the SWP leadership -- that, and the fact that the SWP leadership favored exploring the advance made by the OCI.

The stress is on the role of the SWP, naturally; but I don't see any problem in clarifying the point in view of the clear emphasis placed in the document on the policy of the OCI, which was adopted some time ago: "We were the only ones to speak in the name of an international mandate: we were intervening in the framework of the mandate established by the decisions of the International Bureau in favor of international discussion. Facing us were delegations from different organizations without any common mandate except to listen to us." Note especially: "we were intervening."

As to your question about a "preliminary meeting," this no doubt refers to our informing them of the decision reached by the United Secretariat and our outlining the conditions of the meeting. You will recall that after the United Secretariat decided to meet with representatives of the OCI to hear their proposals, we agreed to get in touch with them to make the practical arrangements. We carried out the assignment, paying special attention to making clear to them what the conditions were. It turned out that they were ready to accept whatever framework the United Secretariat

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proposed. We then got in touch with the FCR to set the time and place.

That the OCI leaders got the point on how the United Secretariat wanted to proceed is shown by the following paragraph in their internal report: "By its very existence the meeting is a verification of the correct character of the tactical steps taken by the International Bureau to intervene in the crisis of the USec. More basically, it is a confirmation of the correctness of the 'open conference' method." The second sentence is the significant one -- open conference method; that is, meetings with all present, aboveboard procedures, no secret behind-the-scenes deals or understandings. I would disagree with the first sentence, in which they take credit for insisting on this way of conducting talks and probing the possibilities; but I would not make it a fighting issue as long as they accept the "open conference method" and adhere to it. (Notice also in that first sentence the clear reference to who took the initiative -- "tactical steps taken by the International Bureau to intervene...")

It is worth noting that in this highly confidential internal report the outline of what occurred at the meeting (leaving aside the self-congratulations, etc.) is substantially the same as the outline reported by the comrades on our side. To me this indicates that the OCI leaders were trying to be accurate as to the facts in their confidential report while interpreting them from their special point of view and with their internal problems in mind (which, of course, colors the facts in a way that might not have occurred had the report been written with the idea of its being published).

While I am on the point, I should remind you that besides Broue, whom you mention, we also talked with Francois Demassot. I forget the exact date -- was it a year and a half ago? -- but I reported that to the United Secretariat at the time. As you will recall, he sought to sound me out on the possibility of the OCI participating in the discussion then going on in the Fourth International and I told him that in my opinion it was excluded.

Also, you will recall, we reported that when Broue was in New York, some of the comrades around the office got into debates with him on the positions held by the OCI, particularly the OCI's calling for a vote for the candidates of the Union of the Left. Since he was here for several weeks, this occurred more than once.

So much for that.

Upon returning from Brussels, we included in our report the points you and Charles made concerning the appropriateness of the SWP making a public statement with regard to the OCI's internal document. The comrades agreed that it might be a good idea but they wanted first to pay the OCI the courtesy of asking them about the accuracy of the document. So I drew up a letter on this. A copy is enclosed. A copy for the FCR is being sent directly to them.

Fraternally yours,

Joe

SWP letterhead

December 22, 1974

Pierre Lambert  
Informations Ouvrieres  
87, rue du Faubourg-Saint-Denis  
74010 Paris, France

Dear Comrade Lambert,

It occurred to me that because of the postal strike in France or some other reason you may not have seen the November 22 issue of the Workers Vanguard, the paper of the Spartacist League; so I am enclosing a copy. It contains an English translation of a confidential internal report, presumably sent by your Political Bureau, informing members of your Central Committee of the details of the meeting in which members of the United Secretariat and observers of the Socialist Workers Party heard the proposal of representatives of the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste to open a discussion and your explanation of the motivations of the OCI in taking the initiative in this.

In addition, the Spartacist League distributed a mimeographed French version of the OCI internal report at public meetings of the Front Communiste Revolutionnaire in Paris. We assume that they also distributed it at public meetings of the OCI, although we have received no confirmation of this. If by chance you have not seen a copy, we can send a Xerox of one that was forwarded to us.

In view of the publicity given to your confidential internal report -- which occurred, of course, through no bad faith on your part -- the Political Bureau of the Socialist Workers Party is considering making a public comment on the incident. We would therefore appreciate learning from you whether the version of the internal report circulated by the Spartacist League is accurate. For instance, is it complete?

As you will gather from the way the Workers Vanguard attacks the OCI and the other participants in the meeting, the Spartacist League is vexed at the initiative you took and alarmed over the possibility that the willingness of the United Secretariat to consider your proposal might lead to some kind of rapprochement. The leaders of the Spartacist League would like to block any amelioration of relations. As we know from experience with this sectarian grouping, they would not hesitate to resort to a provocation to accomplish such an objective.

We would appreciate hearing from you by return mail.

Comradely yours,

Joseph Hansen

cc: United Secretariat  
Front Communiste Revolutionnaire

COPY

New York  
January 2, 1975

Dear Charles,

Enclosed is the public statement that several of you at the last United Secretariat meeting urged us to make.

Comrades here (including myself) still were not totally convinced a public move was the best next step. But our report on the insistence of your request at the last United Secretariat meeting swayed them.

Joe tells me I.P. will publish the OCI internal circular signed Francois as a document along with our statement. Francois confirmed its authenticity when Mary-Alice exchanged the internal bulletins with him.

When you run our statement in Rouge, please use larger size type than you used for Sandor's note on the OCI internal letter -- we almost went blind trying to read it.

Comradely,

Jack

cc: Ernest  
Daniel