

✓ Jack, ... , ... , ... , ...
Sept. 19, 1978

Gus Horowitz
New York

Dear Gus,

Some 90 attended the OST's very successful Congress. It was a tightly organized, democratic affair that would have done us proud. 10 of the 90 were internationals (Manuel and another from Mexico, Cesar of the PSR and Luis of the PST from Colombia, ~~Barbara~~ and 2 others from his group in Panama, ~~Barbara~~ and another from the non-moreno half of the El Salvador split and me.).

①
Sebastian
②
Leopold
Votes on all 7 resolutions before the Congress were unanimous, reflecting the homogeneity of the group. Minority points of view were presented in documents and orally at the Congress, but were on secondary questions. No tendencies were formed. The vote to affiliate to the FI was met with great enthusiasm.

There were 12 bulletins and a pre-Congress discussion of 3 months duration. I attended several branch meetings to observe, where resolutions were discussed. Quite thorough and democratic. The membership seems to be quite well informed on the major issues discussed and debated in the international in recent years.

The womens liberation and world political situation documents were among those voted on. For Costa Rica there were 5 documents: 1 on the party and the labor movement, 1 on affiliation to the FI, 1 on intervention in sectors outside the organized workers' movement, 1 on Perspectives and a balance sheet on their activity over the 2 years, and finally, 1 on organization and statutes for the "new" organization.

Highlights

In the introductory talk ~~the OST attacked the factional obstacles placed in the path of their group, first by the IMT and then by the Moreno Bolshevik Faction. Although it was factually correct, it was extremely agitational and bitter in tone. It left one with the (incorrect) impression they thought the IBF better outside the International. For new members or sympathizers there it might have seemed strange why this group wanted to affiliate with such a bunch of factional groups. Many of the same charges and history were taken up under international points, where it was more appropriate, I think, and with a better tone.~~

Immediately after her talk several of the internationals took the floor. Manuel held forth for 1/2 hour or more. He acknowledged the IMT's factionalism, defended his role, saying he was the one who championed their case inside the IMT. He solidarized with the OST's charges against the IBF, but set a better tone, a better balance, that they belonged inside the international and had to be dealt with politically.

Sebastian from the non-moreno half of the GSI in El Salvador then related the IBF horror story for his country. In addition, he asked the OST for aid in the form of sending a leader for an extended period of collaboration, \$ and literature. He also suggested convening a Central American conference of Trotskyists. It became clear that other Trotskyists in Central America see the OST as playing a key regional role, a view they share.

Leopold then brought greetings and his IBF horror story from Panama. Cesar of the PSR then did the same. The shame was that Luis of the PST had not yet arrived.

Greetings from other organizations, including the GIM, LCR, RWL, the Ecuadorean section, the PSR (Chile), the PRT of Costa Rica were read at on

at one time or another. They were quite pissed, disappointed, that we didn't have a PC representative or more formal greetings and Rodrigo said so. This came just after the reading of Keil's letter. It was a reflection of the close i.d. they feel for the SWP. I eventually brought greetings, explained our limited resources, the importance of our collaborating with the USec in the Colombia and Peruvian situations, how I had been asked to change my plans specifically to be able to observe and report on their Congress, etc. It didn't totally satisfy them, I'm sure, but my greetings were well received. All in all, they seem to be highly sensitive to their relationships with the different currents in the international, understandable in light of recent history.

Luis from the PST arrived later and brought greetings. He made positive statements about the OST's work, made a strong pitch for a campaign of asylum in Panama for Moreno and pushed for a big solidarity campaign around Nicaragua, saying there was a big opportunity for the FI. (Manuel also said the PRT was pressuring the Mexican government to let Moren have asylum there.)

During the discussion on the party and the labor movement Manuel intervened and laid out the new line on proletarianing the composition of the sections, etc. He made some good points here.

Noteworthy in other discussions were the emphasis placed on black work and recruitment, to pay more attention to the small indigenous population, etc. Reminiscent of the type of discussions we have often had. Seek to be very conscious of and determined to penetrate the most oppressed layers of the population. The only black in the OST at the Congress was elected to the NC. He played a prominent role in the discussion on black work.

Discussion on womens liberation work was excellent. The very fact it is being discussed here, is, or course, significant. They have made womens rights a part of their election campaign and founded the MLM (Movimiento por la Liberacion de la Mujere), to probe the possibilities of attracting women to struggle around womens issues. No other womens liberation group exists here. This work seems to be patterned after the IMG's Socialist Womens Group work of several years ago, more than ~~either~~ ours.

They are aggressively recruiting and developing the leadership potential of women members. In the election of delegates their line was that if there were two militants of "equal" qualifications, the woman should be elected the delegate. This met with some resistance, but after a good discussion in the ranks seemed to be accepted. ~~Of the~~ The percentage of women is about 1/3 of the total membership, a % they say would be higher if a recent fusion had not been almost all men!

Their statutes of the OST document is quite detailed, with much of it being motivated as defensive measures against future Moreno type maneuvering, etc. A bit formalistic here probably, but then again, how many sections have a half century of continuous experience and tradition behind them/?

Under the international document an excellent discussion was had. Generally the OST's line is quite close to that of ours, with the exception of Cuba (in general), the Ogaden, Cuba's role in Africa, the French elections (they agree with the OCI line). With more documentation of our position on the Ogaden we might convince them on this score.

Almost every international intervened under this point-something the OST expressly invited. Manuel reviewed various IMF positions, especially on Angola and Portugal. His tone was quite even. He said he agreed with the SWP on the Ogaden and on Cuba in general. Luis intervened, attacked ~~us on Angola~~

OST/3

us on Angola, laid out his side of the Panamanian events but ducked the political points Bernal had made on the Moreno position on Torrijos and the Canal. Comrades agreed he was quite weak, ducking the political questions (although quite factional). I defended our position on Angola and was well received. I also reviewed, in another intervention, our view of the fight in the international, especially as it related to our conception of the international and democratic centralism (a point we were attacked on). Forgot, in his international report Andres indicated they agree more with the OCI line in Peru. They made a big point of the fact that on entering the FI one of their ~~goals~~ objectives isto fight for fusion with the Lambertists internationally. Manuel took note of this and laid responsibility for the roadblock at the door of the French section.

A resolution on Nicaragua was drawn up and signed by the internationals there and the OST (sent it to IP already). Luis objected to Bernal's signing it and Rodrigo later convinced him and Manuel that it was better to avoid a provocation or pretext for the IBF, so his signature was removed. We came in for mild criticism by the OST leadership for having too much of a "hands off" policy, for not collaborating enough internationally. All in all, the OST leadership have their own, strongly defended positions.

(Another point I forgot. ~~Luis~~ Cesar had some interesting things to say about the IBF's line. He sees a pattern of capitulation to the Social Democracy. Believe's Moreno is engaged in a big maneuver with the Social Democracy internationally. Said Colombian PST discussed defending Moreno as a Social Democratic leader!)

General Points

The OST has about 100 members now, having recruited 8-10 from the Congress. 30 are women, ~~2~~ 2 are black, 1 or 2 indigenous, and 8 high schoolers. About 30 are university students. Of the working cdes 4 are in the hospital workers union, with 1 of these cdes a leader of the union in her hospital (see interview for IP) and leader of recent strike.

In the elections for their NC they elected 22 as fulls and 7 as alternates, with a "Executive Leadership Team" (PC) of 7. 9 of the NC are women, 3 of the 7 member "Team". 1 of the NCers is from a group they are in the process of fusion with, the Fuerza Obrera Revolucionaria. This group has dissolved, but held off joining the OST, except for its leader. They are acting as sympathizers and observing the OST. Apparently they're a bit wary, since many came from the old PRT. The comrades hope to bring them into membership what with the results of the Congress. The OST leadership seems to be aware their NC is quite large, but see it as a transitional phenomena.

They have some 13 full timers and 3 offices (one of them their N.O.). They shortly plan to divide, believing expanding the current 4 branches to 6 or more will enhance the development of new members and their interventions, if they reduce the size of each.

Overall I was quite impressed with their leadership. Quite capable politically and organizationally. Not only theoretically, but as politicians who have maneuvered quite impressively, with their small forces, in the class struggle (black struggle in Limoncito, the election campaign, Nicaragua, Plutarcho's defense, the hospital strike, etc.) Rodrigo, Andres, and Sarah were especially impressive. In addition, Patricia, Ernesto and Laura are all solid. Many of the women struck me as quite confident of themselves politically and were very good speakers. Prospects for party building here are excellent.

comradely,

Mike

Bernal's address:

Apartado 4677
Panama 5, Panama
64-49-37 (phone)

for lit, etc.:

Apartado 7269
Panama 5, ~~Ra~~ Republica de Panama
in the name of Francisco Gonzalez

***Manuel just came back from meeting with PRT. They're quite sectarian and in bad shape. Apparently down to 12 members.