

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
June 5, 1973

TO ALL NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Attached is a report by Dan Styron on a meeting he and Olga Rodriguez attended recently in Paris.

The report is for national committee information only.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice Waters

Mary-Alice Waters

May 25, 1973

Dear Comrades,

Olga and I were able to attend a conference of the section leaders of the Communist League in Paris the weekend of May 19-20. The purpose of the conference was to discuss the disputes in the International. According to Riel, this was the second such conference on international disputes with the Paris section leaders. There were basically 5 reports: one a report on the general differences, or an overview by Vergeat; a report by Pierre on the differences around the European resolution; a report by Riel on Latin America; a report by Sandor on Argentina and Bolivia; a report by Verla on differences around the women's liberation question and a report on the Middle East which we did not hear.

We were, of course, listening through a translator so some things understandably got garbled, but the political tenor of the meeting was clear. The following are notes that we took on each of the reports and then some general impressions that we had of the meeting, which was attended by some 50 comrades.

1. Vergeat, who gave an introduction or an overview of the International differences, said that the important differences were (1) the character of the mass vanguard; (2) the colonial revolution (i.e., Vietnam and Palestine); and (3) minority actions. After giving a few examples, he spoke of the importance of unity and centralization of the International. He was upset that Jack had stated that the dispute was over the orthodoxy of Trotskyism and stated that he (Vergeat) strongly disagreed that this was the dispute.

Vergeat then gave what he saw to be the line-up on support to the two tendencies: For the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency -- the SWP, ISA/LSO, PST, the Tendency of the IMG, Aarhus (Denmark), the minority in Spain, Hong Kong, India, one of the organizations in Australia, New Zealand and Iran.

For the Maitan-Mandel-Frank Tendency -- He said that most of the European leaderships agreed with the MMFT, with the exception of some people in Belgium, Aarhus, and Germany, who tend to agree with the IIT on Latin America but agree with the MMFT on all other questions in dispute. Vergeat also said that Japan leans to MMFT and that Israel and Lebanon are still undecided. He pointed out that the leadership in England is not a part of any tendency, that Bolivia and Chile are with the MMFT and that the PRT(C) has disintegrated and is outside of the FI. He also mentioned that there were two organizations in Mexico, and that one supported the MMFT.

2. Pierre on the Differences on the European Resolution:

Pierre admitted that Mary-Alice's criticism of the European resolution is not yet available in French. He said that the key question at the 10th World Congress would be Europe, not Latin America, particularly Argentina. He pointed out that the European document in the International discussion is very similar to the Communist League's 22 Theses from their last convention. He pointed out that the task in Europe is to win hegemony within the mass vanguard, not on the full program but on essential actions and important questions.

Pierre then defended the idea of a continental document. He

pointed out that the Third International called for the "United States of Europe," a continental strategy, and pointed out that if you couldn't write a strategy for a continent, how could Trotsky write a program for the entire world -- the Transitional Program.

He just ran down the various points of differences in Mary-Alice's criticism of the European resolution and said that she underestimates the importance of action. He said that the SWP is a propagandist organization. That the problem is not to recruit 100 or 1000 new people to the different sections of the FI, but the problem is to organize the mass vanguard in action. That party building today is fundamentally different than during the '20s or '30s because we don't have or lead many workers.

He stated that Mary-Alice refuses to characterize the period that we are now in in Europe, but that this characterization of the period is important if we are to determine the tasks of our European comrades.

He then pointed out that the SWP believes that its members should intervene in the mass movements as members of the mass organizations, not as party members. That independent initiatives by the party do not exist for the SWP -- that for the SWP "violence" is spontaneous. But it is necessary for the party to take independent initiatives and teach the necessity of violence in action, according to Pierre.

There was a brief discussion period following Pierre's report on his and Vergeat's reports. The discussion consisted mainly of questions of fact.

3. Riel on Latin American questions.

Riel's report began with 3 criticisms of the 9th World Congress document on Latin America:

(1) That a new generation of revolutionists has grown up in Latin America that is not Guevarist -- a new vanguard. That this could be seen by events in Venezuela, Argentina and Chile. That this new current is not Guevarist, but is concerned with questions of mass work and military confrontations. That the 9th World Congress was in error in overlooking this current and instead orienting toward the guerrillaists.

(2) That the POR-ELN front was an error. That this error was a result of the 9th World Congress document on Latin America. Error because the POR did not fight within this front for program. That the POR-ELN front was a static front, a strategic front. He pointed out that as a tactic such a front is possible, but not as a strategy.

(3) That the 9th World Congress resolution on Latin America did not properly estimate the weakness of our organizations in Latin America -- for instance, the POR had only 100 members and the PRT(C) wasn't Trotskyist, he said.

Riel pointed out that the 9th World Congress document was also very good in 2 respects: (1) That it correctly showed that the slow development of the workers movement is not possible in Latin America (Chile being an exception); and (2) that the document attempted to set an orientation for our comrades in L.A. for the first time. This in itself was a big advance for the FI because previously the FI had limited itself to comments on

events in L.A. The 9th World Congress document on L.A. gave an orientation for intervention. In this respect the 9th World Congress resolution on L.A. is the same as the European document for the 10th World Congress. He said that without an orientation our comrades would fall into empiricism.

He also said that one of the important things that we needed was a precise analysis of Cuba today because this is a big discussion in L.A. He said that the minority was correct in its criticisms of focism and Guevarism and that Hansen has an objective basis for his criticisms of Castroism.

He then gave a quick tour of the L.A. sections:

Venezuela has a very big vanguard. That there are great opportunities for us there, but we have few forces. To trick the workers, the ruling class has called for a 17-month election campaign. A centrist is running for the presidency and that the only newspaper to support this candidate is our newspaper, Voz Marxista. Riel pointed out that this was not unprincipled, but that it is incorrect. He said that the newspaper printed a picture of the candidate on its front page (!), and that its only criticism of the centrist candidate is his program. He again pointed out that this was not unprincipled, but that it was tail-endism. That worst of all, this electoral approach provides no perspective for the large vanguard in Venezuela, which isn't much interested in election campaigns.

Peru -- both FIRs have 40-50 members. That Hugo Blanco's FIR has a correct estimate of the Valesco regime but in its trade union work, Blanco's FIR only puts out leaflets on factory problems, not on the "big questions" of the day. That one other problem with Blanco's FIR is that it works in the committees (or communities or commissions -- our translator wasn't sure how to translate the word) set up by the regime. He said the other FIR is a supporter of the MMFT and puts out general propaganda and boycotts these committees the regime has set up.

Uruguay -- Said that the PRT-U joined a multi-class front.

Argentina -- Riel said that Pedro says the PST now has 2783 members but that probably is high. He said that when he was there a year ago the Verdad group had only 500-600. He then went through what he described as a history of adaptation on the part of Moreno.

(1) That in 1959-60 Moreno had adapted to the Peronistas by letting them use the structures of his organization. He pointed out that Moreno now admits this was an error.

(2) That the fusion between Moreno's group and the FRP was bad. That no real debate took place before the fusion and that the organizations never fused organizationally or politically.

(3) That the fusion with the PSA is another example of adaptation. That this could be seen by the Verdad group keeping the name of the PSA for such a long time and through its nomination of Coral to head up its presidential ticket. That while a lot of recruitment took place, this recruitment to the party was on the basis of an election campaign, which could cause problems in the future. Also the fact the campaign was the center of work for the PST for an entire year is another example of adaptation. Although this was not unprincipled, it was tail-endist.

(4) That the PST had the correct position on Peronism but

had no clear analysis of the elections themselves. The PST addresses demands to the Peronist bureaucrats and the Campora government. Example: the PST states publicly that it would abide by the decisions of a conference called by the Peronist union leadership if such a conference took place. Moreno has already shown that he is ready to capitulate to the Peronists. That he has a syndicalist, not a Trotskyist perspective. That Moreno has no orientation toward the other left tendencies. The PST's newspaper is opportunist toward the guerrillas -- that it makes only paternalistic criticisms without fundamental criticisms of guerrillas.

Riel in his report also stated that the IPT has no answers for the new vanguard that is now reacting against Castroism in L.A. That the task of the FI is to criticize the failure of Castroism and that the situation in L.A. is more favorable today for building the FI than at the time of the last world congress.

Riel said that his report would be entered as a discussion article in the international discussion.

4. Sandor on Argentina and Bolivia -- Bulk of report on Argentina. S. stated that the differences with the PRT(C) did not become clear until 1972. That at the time of the last world congress everyone knew that the PRT(C)'s program (the Little Red Book) was not a Trotskyist program, but that no one objected at that time to admitting them to the FI.

That the 5th congress of the PRT(C) vote for affiliation with the FI did not represent a victory for the FI because in fact only a minority were really in favor of affiliation.

That the PRT(C) regarded the SWP's statement on the Sallustro affair as treasonous. That the reason the split occurred between Moreno and the PRT(C) was because Moreno had a pessimistic evaluation of the Argentine situation. The PRT believed that a clash with the military would precede any mass mobilizations. That the PRT(C) was opposed to focism and insurreccionalism -- that Argentina was not Russia. Instead they looked to the Vietnamese model.

That in 1969 they changed empirically to urban guerrilla warfare because of the first Cordobazo. That their milk distributions moved in the direction of dual power and were very popular, but then the police would arrest those who took the stolen goods. That the ERP was 80% PRTers and never became the mass army it had intended to become. That the ERP had no organic link to the masses. But the ERP was very popular in Argentina as were the Tupamaros in Uruguay and that the actions of the ERP were very popular. Sandor said that this is one thing that the SWP refuses to recognize and that the SWP calls these distributions "Robin Hood actions." He then pointed out that we shouldn't forget that Robin Hood played a certain important social role! That even Moreno supported the Swift action. He said that the high point of the ERP-PRT was in 1971.

Sandor stated that the Lanusse regime had called for elections to head off the linking up of the vanguard actions with the masses and the PRT correctly opposed the GAN. However, the PRT(C) divided on the elections, with a section of the PRT-ERP wanting to link up with the Peronistas. This became the ERP 22. The others wanted to prevent the elections, and the Sanchez and Sallustro affairs were designed to do this. S. said that Rouge

never supported the Sallustro affair -- that kidnapping is a question of tactics. And Rouge didn't know if it was the right or wrong tactic.

He said the PRT controls a newspaper -- it can't put the paper out in its own name -- Nuevo Hombre.

Several other splits have taken place in the PRT(C). One, the "Red Faction" either split or was thrown out of the PRT. It has 50 members and is not Peronist. This faction fought for democracy within the PRT, was against militarization and was for a political debate within the PRT. S. says they were expelled.

A third group was expelled also. It had 5-6 members, one of whom was a leading member of the Political Bureau. He wrote the military program of the PRT, but now agrees with the FI completely, according to Sandor.

The fourth group to be expelled from the PRT is the former International Commission of the PRT. Sandor points out that the big problem is that these groups seem to fight against each other as strongly as they fight against the official PRT. He is not sure what all their differences are.

S. thinks the FI should have been more critical of the PRT(C) and should have been more critical of the ideas contained in the Red Book. He said no one at the 9th World Congress criticized the Red Book.

S. then went on to say that the FI's conception was that a Trotskyist group working within the PRT(C) would transform it. He said the International Commission of the FI had relations with the "Red Faction" of the PRT. According to S., the IC of the PRT made a bad mistake in not telling the FI of the situation within the PRT so that the FI could intervene. He pointed out that if the FI had been more critical of the PRT before they could not have transformed the PRT but could have at least built a faction in it. S. said that the PRT had not circulated the letter from the "FI," although others had circulated this letter. Also, that the material aid to the PRT was not as much as that to the POR, and this tended to increase the Castroist influence in the PRT.

In the question and answer period that followed Sandor said the following:

The SWP is against armed initiatives by the party because in the U.S. these initiatives are impossible. The state is too strong. But the problem is that the SWP projects this onto other countries.

He said the PRT probably wouldn't come to the world congress, but he thinks that they should remain in the FI on the condition that they circulate the "letter from the FI" within the ranks. Stated that the "Red Faction" and the International Commission would probably ask to become sympathizing sections of the FI in Argentina.

A split in 1969, called the center split, now wants to make a self-criticism in the discussion bulletins of the FI, although they are no longer members of the FI.

In addition to the splits already mentioned, there are two or three other groups who have either split or been expelled from the PRT(C), one putting out a magazine called Soc. Revolution.

S. said the 9th World Congress document on L.A. left itself

open to misinterpretation and that this was an error.

Said that the FI would submit a "text" on Argentina, and would see what the reactions of the different groups in Argentina are to it.

S. said that if mistakes were made in Bolivia, they were the result of the fact that the POR did not take armed initiatives soon enough. Suggested that after the Workers Assembly voted to arm the workers, the POR should have occupied an army barracks or taken some land to set an example.

Said the line of the document to be submitted by the FI for the Argentine section would be that the first form of dual power in Argentina will be soviets.

During the discussion, several comrades of the Communist League spoke of the 9th World Congress document on L.A. as being "catastrophic." Vergeat spoke strongly against writing off the PRT, pointing out the problem as being one of weakness of the FI not the PRT.

Both Sandor and Riel had been quite critical of the MIR of Chile in their reports. This had been a change from Rouge's coverage of the MIR and many of the comrades at the meeting noticed this change and wanted to know why. Sandor explained that the Chilean section of the FI, which now leans to the MMFT, is critical of Rouge's seemingly uncritical support to the MIR.

5. Verla on differences around women's liberation -- This report was basically an attack on the SWP's position on women's liberation. V. quoted extensively from the SWP's convention resolution, Mary-Alice's article on "Marxism and Feminism" and a women's liberation pamphlet put out by the ISA/LSO.

She attacked the approach of the SWP and ISA/LSO as being multi-class -- especially the "Sisterhood is Powerful" concept.

Said that the SWP struggles against those in the women's liberation movement who want to split it in a socialist or anti-capitalist direction. That the abortion movement could be coopted and abortion doesn't strike directly against capitalism. She objected to the single-issue approach we took in the women's liberation movement around abortion. V. said the SWP doesn't raise slogans that could raise the level of consciousness of the participants because the SWP believes that a mass movement around democratic demands has an anticapitalist dynamic to it. This could be seen in that the SWP does not raise slogans around socialized medicine. The SWP, according to V., is not grouping the vanguard within the women's liberation movement.

Her report then concentrated on Lenin's position. She said that Lenin refused all links with the "bourgeois" feminist movement. That although he supported the suffragist movement, Lenin insisted on the organizational independence of both the party and the mass organizations from the structures of the bourgeois feminist movement. She stated the SWP functions in the women's movement like it does in the antiwar movement (we didn't raise "solidarity" slogans in the antiwar movement) and that the SWP tail-ends the women's liberation movement.

Although her report concentrated heavily on the SWP's "incorrect" approach to the women's liberation movement, she did say that the Communist League is opposed to any "Sisterhood is Power-

ful" concept of women's oppression. That the Communist League wants to emphasize what divides women, not what united them. And that the Communist League favours both men and women participating in the abortion struggle, and the organizations set up around it.

The discussion was very short. A question was asked about the SWP's attitude on gay liberation. There were a couple of minutes of laughter and joking, but Sandor intervened saying that the oppression of gays was an important question in the American vanguard.

There was also a report on the Middle East, which we couldn't stay for as it was getting a little late and we had other things to do. We also lost our translator after V.'s report because he had to go to another meeting.

Both Riel and Sandor said that Riel's report on Latin America would be submitted as a discussion article in the International discussion. Sandor said that probably not every member of the MMFT would agree with Riel's report.

In general the conference was a little disappointing. For one thing, it was poorly organized -- scheduled to begin at 10:00 am on Saturday, it had to be moved because the place where they had intended to hold it was not reserved. Rescheduled for 11 am, it didn't get underway until 2 pm because the rooms in the other place were all full at 11 am.

There were no documents for sale at the conference, nor did it appear that any of the members had documents with them, except for one member who had one document with him. Furthermore, all the presentations, with the exception of Pierre's, had nothing to do with the documents, as can be seen by this report.

The major discussion throughout was about the SWP. Every report had as its axis the bankruptcy of the SWP. And, on the other hand, none of the reports projected a clear line of action.

I had mentioned to Ed Shaw that if they let us in the conference they would be forced to allow us to participate in some of the discussion because of pressure from the ranks. This proved to be 100% false. Not only were we not invited to speak, but we weren't even called upon to answer questions of fact regarding the SWP. Instead, these questions were answered by Riel, Verla or someone else. We were not even introduced to the comrades as a formality. And during the breaks none of those attending (some 50 comrades) showed any interest in discussing any of the questions with us, much less any interest in trying to convince us of their positions.

I realize that the report is rather long and exhaustive, but I felt that it would be important to give the comrades as complete an idea of what was presented at this conference.

Comradely,

s/Dan