

MURCH 30. 1971

Dear Joe and Barry;

I hope you got my article on Britain ok. I mailed it from ~~Milano~~ Turin at Air Atellia—there was a post office strike with the bureaus being picketed. It may well suffer a bit from being put into shape while riding a train going over the Alps but I think that it is a good article and I think that it is of some importance too. Cuts right across the evaluation made by Pat. I am anxious to see it in print because it is substantially the line of a contribution I made to the Turin European Workers Conference in the absence of any British attendance and something might come out of that.

But to clear up a few details; Do you get the Swiss paper? We should of course get exchanges; La Breche —Case Postale 1000 —Lausanne-20/Sevelin I met two very friendly comrades 1) Mary Johnson, Suisse
and 2) Luciano Scagliotti Corso Francia 356/5
10148 Torino, Italy
Corso Vizaglio 6
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1) She is an Australian comrade who is now married to a Turin comrade. A very active and dynamic comrade. She told me that the Turin group has ~~about~~ 27 members. They sell regularly 300 copies of Bandiera Rosa. They recruited ten comrades ~~throughout~~ a campaign that culminated with a meeting addressed by Livio among youth influenced by that fairly recent split from the CP led by a couple of members in parliament—they are publishing a paper which they plan to put out as a daily shortly—Manifesto group I think it is called. You will no doubt know of it. The Turin group has a few activists in the big auto plant there but it is largely student. She gave me the impression that they are wearing down their forces in super activities outside factory gates trying to break into the working class. She gave me some interesting information on her experiences in Australia. She met Barry when he was there. The Canadians are at it again. The man behind the scenes is a Roger Barnes who we tried to recruit in vain when he lived in Toronto. He is behind the Percys. I gather she and her husband handle literature sales in the area. Apparently they are hard up financially. She doesn't understand the women's liberation struggle. It would be very nice if you could manage to send her copies of two or three of the latest pamphlets Pathfinder has put out on Women's liberation covering our strategy and tactics. Enclose a catalogue—she will no doubt order the off-size Trotsky books etc.

2- This young fellow of about 19 searched me out to talk to me about the Canadian and US movement—speaks good English— It would be excellent if we could find some way to invite him to one of our youth conventions. I promised him we would send him the Canadian youth paper. I had several talks about ~~our~~ our orientation to the working class movement, to the unions in contrast to their ouvrierism during ~~the~~ and after meals.

I returned from Turin via Paris so I could drop into the Pongs. I gave them the money but they are going to hold it—air part of it until these see how things work out. Pi-lan has been found to have high blood pressure and her dentist has now decided to hold off on all the extractions. He apparently is going to make a partial denture for her. We did not go anywhere with the Krivine proposition as the work was already underway when she got my note about it. They are in good spirits. He is anxious to get Joe's document—he wants his to supplement it in some way. He was glad to hear Pete's report ~~was~~ dismayed by Livio's line on Argentina and pleased with the Brazilian document on kidnappings in IGP. Your State Cap and Art Fox group are buzzing around him. Three of them came to see him a week or so ago on their way to visit their English co-thinkers. He was impressed and was all hot for them to approach the SWP for unity. I didn't have much of a concrete character about the antics of these characters so couldn't cool him down much. It would be good if you had something handy that you could send him. They are dropping in on him again on their way back in a week or so. I tried to get him to go down to the Ligue headquarters to meet some youth who might make a bit of an effort to keep him in touch with the real world—he said he would do this next time I came. They gave me a Hongkong address for very select use—NO MAIL—if we have a comrade heading into the area—Public Printing Press 1 Shelley St Central District telephone in advance Mr. S.T. Cheng 10 am to 6 pm Monday to Saturday number 240 223.

But to get to the European Workers Conference of Turin. About 60 attended the sessions held in a basement club room of a workers CP community organization which is very friendly to us. I think I told you that the French were only going to send two --well they sent six--but my impression is that three of them were extras--one of them was Joel who is if I recall correctly one of the few Ligue Communist professionals (full time) he is their trade union agitator I would suppose is the word. The British who talked of 6 or 7 ended up with no one and no explanation. There were 5 or 6 from Switzerland, about 15 from Belgium, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ there was someone from Spain(at the rally) 4 or 5 from Germany and the rest were from Italy(the other 30) Since there are 27 members in Turin and I was told that they had invited close Turin sympathizers it would seem to me that there were few from other Italian cities although I think I told you this was an all Italian effort. The sessions were underway by the time the train taking me and it turned out three Belgian comrades arrived about noon on ~~Saturday~~ Sunday. They went on to about 10 then adjourned so that the comrades could be at the theater meeting Sunday morning at 8. They recommenced at 2:30 Sunday afternoon and ended about 6. The theater rally was a success, they were worried that its seating capacity was too small (400) and they were about right..they fit about 500. They apparently had done a great deal of poster for the meeting. They decided to move me at the last moment from the place they arranged for sleeping as the comrade living there had been visited by 7 cops the night before over the poster. It was obvious as soon as the meeting got underway that the great bulk of the audience was quite new to them. They opened the meeting with the Internationale. I had sat about one third up from the front and rose. ~~Now~~ I was the only person to do so aside from the block of comrades all jammed together in the first rows. The comrades tried to consistently hop the meeting up with applause and chants. These too showed that the audience was quite new. It was also quite young, and generally enthusiastic--they told me they sold a lot of literature--much more than they had expected. Ernest gave a short talk of a general character in French which was translated. ~~Then~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Joel's fine bit of agitation was translated. An older Belgian trade unionists talk was translated--the rest were in Italian with one in Spanish, untranslated. I would say that it left a good impression on anyone attending although they did not seem to have any party building devices. Livio and Ernest were highly elated--with Ernest insisting that we go off and have lunch together. He had been there the week on a lecture engagement at the university for which he got 400 bucks that went to the Italians. He was enthusiastic about the possibilities in Italy and told me that they had about 40 members in Turin. I hated to but told him--27. I would say that all in all the ~~whole thing~~ was a good project--particularly to build the movement in such a key industrial city as Turin through the mass meeting. The conference itself was another matter.

Here we were confronted by about 10 talks of an extended character all but two of them petty detailed reports of what ~~work~~ were trying to do in regards to certain strike struggles that had been or were taking place in the areas the comrades came from. They had the character of revelations ---that there is a working class, that they are radical and go on strike I must be getting ~~blase~~---particularly when you think of the political sophistication of the European ~~workers~~ ^{workers} movement---but you think that these strikes, largely over wages were actually revolutions they way the talked about them. ~~Sixxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ I was going to say that after all the is not too bad---the movement is attracting youth who have no experience. But not so. The two Belgian comrades were workers in their 40s or 50s and they were talking in the same way, as was the German comrade of about 35- 40yrs. The European movement is on an ~~ouvriest~~ kick, and Ernest and Livio are right behind it. It seems clear to me that although they are or have been attracting youth (student youth) their whole orientation is to the workers, to the factories and from the outside. They send these youth to the factory gates, not with the party paper but with shop paper with which they make ~~made~~ attempt to inject themselves into the union s But there were two talks that tended to cut across this---one by an Ital comrade from Bari, a big man who is on the Italian leading body and spent a great deal of time trying to organize this operation (I have forgotten name but you would probably know him Barry) He attributed the new union radicalization in Italy to the impact of May June 68 and the work of the Maoists and spontaneists. He attacked the struggles initiated by them having no perspective of being artificial---largely because they did not have a transitional program. He said that ~~the~~ task was not just escalation of the struggle but its coordination around ~~transitional~~ ^{transitional} in some detail with the sliding scale of wages demand, and open the book But while he raised the transitional program he did not seem to disagree with the general ~~orientation~~ orientation of the movement away from the student milieu and to the workers from the outside.

I talked of the youth radicals who have now entered into the work force and their impact on the old unionists and the union structures. He noted the lack of successes of the Maoists and spontaneists which we should study and the need to reevaluate many of our previous opinions—lot of it useless and false because we did not take into account many differences of development in various countries. He noted that they had few connections in the factories and that they had to use the youth in some way to overcome this—but many problems arise—generally when they are sent in front of factory to demonstrate a petty bourgeois extremist outlook. We need to develop a program that corresponds to real problems that will give a central axis to our work and he noted there was a discussion going on in FI on workers control and transitional demands. He noted that the workers that the LC has recruited came through general propaganda campaigns carried by the section—not work in the factories but Vietnam, the Guegu trials, the campaign against the fascists and the police. The LC is going to concentrate on this approach. Then he went on to talk about their specific factory work, which I gather is quite extensive—but he emphasized the problems, the difficulties—how ~~the~~ in France as distinct from Italy the wage union bureaucrats often have the confidence of the workers, how workers they make contact with through this work won't join the LC because it is small and can't protect them. Joel read his report and I think that it is possible that it was preliminary notes for documentation for their convention. There were no questions and discussion, all the reports were long and generally tedious and it was hard to be sure what is going on but I had the worst impression from the Belgians and Germans—next the Italians and the best from the French who at least see some problems and the empirical observation that they recruit in the unions from their generalized propaganda campaigns is an important one. When I next go to Paris they will probably have something more for their congress—possibly something on work in the unions. Did you get a copy of the one bulletin they have put out so far?

When the British didn't appear I suggested to Livio that I should give a report on British developments. To his query I assured him that I was following things there closely. He made no moves by the last afternoon so I went up to the chair and said I would like to say a few words—maybe ten minutes. They gladly agreed. Livio made a nice introduction. I told them that a European workers conference could not go by without at least noting the British struggle—since they were the most broad and radical struggles taking place in all Europe. At the public meeting Livio devoted some time to Cordoba and Argentina—however of course it was not translated. But I noted that the British struggles didn't break plate glass for the simple reason that the workers had a sense of their unity and power. That was the other side of the reformist parliamentarist illusions that many revolutionists noted about the British workers—their profound class consciousness, and sense of power. I referred to the old man's projection in *Whither Britain*. Noted also that there were more Trotskyists in Britain outside the FI than anywhere else in the world except perhaps France—and the big challenge before our British comrades. Got a big applause and then one of those one of those beat applauses.

All in all I think it came off well. But too bad I didn't get a better picture of the Italian scene—that Serio didn't come up or those comrades who came to see Peng, Alan and Connie. It cost a hell of a lot of money—almost \$55 travelling along, not counting the expensive means the Italians eat. And while there Ernest told me that the Swiss unknown to him ~~there~~ are holding their convention this coming weekend. I suppose I should go

comradely: Ross