

Montreal, Feb. 28, 1974.

LTF steering committee,

I have a suggestion to make for the LTF political resolution, better late than never. Essentially it seems to be a question of balance, since I agree with the main line of all the sections of the document. We have had somewhat of a discussion recently here in Montreal concerning the importance of trade union work, everyone agreeing that we had to strengthen our work in this area. I was thus interested to look through the LTF political resolution in order to find some comments which might throw some light on our discussion: some comment on the importance of trade union work in our overall orientation, some explanation of our main aims, examples of developments in the last decade which confirm the analysis of "trade unions in the epoch of imperialist decay", for example the role of the trade union bureaucracy, as well as a bit of a development of the experience in Argentina and what lessons can be drawn from that.

The first item listed at the end of the document as one of the arenas meriting special attention from the FI is the building of class struggle wings in the unions. This is very good, but the criticism that I have is that other areas meriting attention, such as women's work, student and national revolts ~~and other~~ are in fact given special attention in the document, special sections being devoted to them, whereas this is not the case for the trade union movement.

Of course in a sense, the whole document is relevant to trade union work, in the sense that we want to raise all the big political questions in the labor movement. As well, the section of "sudden breakdowns" discuss certain programmatic questions of relevance to trade union work, such as the fight against inflation, etc. However this is inadequate for two reasons. If we had left out the section on women, we could still argue that in any case the whole document is relevant to women in so far as socialism is relevant to women's oppression. Although there are scattered references to themes of pertinence to intervention on a trade union level, it shouldn't just be left scattered through the document, if possible, any more than we neglect having a trade union fraction and approach trade union ^{work} in passing through all our other political interventions. This is a specific movement deserving a specific analysis, and in fact, one could argue that it is the key area of work, in so far as it corresponds "to the main line of march" in addition to the fact the resolution of the problems facing women, oppressed nationalities, etc. depends ~~on the last analysis~~ on these struggles being integrated into the mass workers' movement.

Allan Harris points out in the document on England, how the "revolution around the corner" perspective tends to minimize the importance of building an alternative leadership in the unions, there being not enough time for this. In fact, one might find, that if one is prone to schematically overestimating the ripeness of the political conjuncture, comrades would mainly search out forms of organization bypassing the unions, perhaps, in their minds presaging the formation of soviets, but in fact constituting a "red union" type approach.

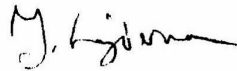
As pointed out by the contribution of the European LTF comrades and Mary Alice in "Orientation of the FI in Europe", the MMF really gives no answers to comrades wanting to know "how we should carry out work in the unions." This is probably not an accident and the LTF should I think be able to do better.

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Another point along the same line, is that in a situation that is not pre-revolutionary, in general, in most countries, it is the unions which are the fundamental expression of working-class radicalisation along with mass workers parties. The key importance of our links in the unions, in order to avoid isolation from the working class, was pointed out by Joseph Hansen in his letter to the Uruguayan comrades. Whereas entry work in mass workers parties is a very tactical question, trade union work is central to our orientation. In a "normal" non-revolutionary situation a proletarian orientation means an orientation to the unions.

Another point that I would make has to do with "end of the long detour". I think that this is another reason for special emphasis on trade union work. Part of the long detour, in my opinion, is the fact that much of the "new radicalisation" has developed on a world scale without organic ties to the organised workers movement. This includes the peasant struggles, but also student, women's, anti-imperialist struggles, etc. The most extreme example of this is in the U.S. We are now seeing a return to what seems to be the "classical" situation where all the discontent of oppressed layers of society becomes championed by the organised workers' movement. The trade unions thus become important not only for the specific economic struggles of the working-class, which is the school where probably the greatest number of workers receive their first elements of political training but it also becomes central to every single political intervention we make, since our main base of support is going to be shifting more and more to the organised workers' movement.

Comradely,



John Lejderman

Moreno

MEMORANDUM ON THE POLITICAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACTION -- Feb. 1974

1. In general we are in agreement with the document. We have five observations or alterations to make, on which we would like to reach agreement in the faction so that our interventions at the Congress reflect a common position, if possible.
2. We continue to disagree with your characterization or general definition of the popular front, or to put it another way, we can agree with one of your interpretations of the popular front as Stalinist class collaboration at the electoral and governmental level with the bourgeoisie or with some of its sectors. We have always held the position that in essence the popular front is an electoral and governmental agreement with imperialism and its colonial lackeys. To avoid a terminological discussion, we accept on principle your very general definition of class collaboration, including that with the national bourgeoisie which has conflicts with imperialism at given times. If that's your definition, it must be clarified. That is, it must be pointed out that the popular frontism of Stalinism leads it at certain times to bloc with imperialist political sectors and in the backward countries with pro-imperialist sectors. But at other times they bloc with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois sectors that have frictions with imperialism. This amplification will clarify many phenomena which can be confused with so general a definition, since there are popular fronts with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois sectors which gives them an anti-imperialist or nationalist coloring as opposed to others which have an openly pro-imperialist content. ~~WE ARE OPPOSED TO ALL VARIANTS OF THE POPULAR FRONT BECAUSE IT IS CLASS COLLABORATION BUT THE TACTICS THAT FLOW FROM OUR OPPOSITION VARY RADICALLY BETWEEN A POPULAR FRONT WITH NATIONALIST ELEMENTS OR WHICH IS PREDOMINANTLY NATIONALIST AND ONE WHICH IS PRO-IMPERIALIST.~~
3. Making the actual castings of the vote a principles question seems to us to be wrong. There are historical precedents which call into question such a categorical assertion. We attach some. There are others raised by Lenin. But this is what we propose: Let's suppose that we are doing entry work into the Socialist Party and they decide to support the popular front. We would oppose it vehemently, but let's suppose we lose the vote inside the organization or they maneuver us. Should we break the discipline of the SP, where we are doing entry work, or should we try to choose our own moment to do so? As the resolution is written, revolutionary politics -- which is always concrete -- takes on the character of a moral code, elevating a tactical question to a question of principle. We should not say that on the basis of principle revolutionaries never, ever vote for a popular front; what we should say is that they never support it, making a distinction between supporting it and voting for it.
4. It seems to us that an exaggerated importance on a world scale is given to the women's liberation movement, and on the other hand, that not enough importance is given to a fact as important or more important than the women's movement -- the peasant movement in the backward countries, for example India and at present Bolivia.
5. We believe that the position that our task is the accumulation of cadres is correct, but unilateral because it does not deal with two questions. 1) Why does it continue to be our main task? and

2) What type of cadres do we need? For us, the main task is to integrate our members and groups into the living process of the class struggle, and in those places where there are workers' struggles, into these struggles. We can and must find the means to achieve this task, but these should be short-term steps. We should never depart from the fundamental and immediate objective. The same holds true in relation to the reasons given for the downturn. They are due to the downturn in the class struggle and the workers movement in this post-war period. When those conditions changed, the conditions for the development of our parties also changed. In that sense the document gives the impression of gradualism; of long-range tasks, when the objective conditions -- as Mary-Alice's document on Europe points out -- make it possible to take spectacular leaps forward in the development of our sections and in our implantation in the working class and mass movements. The process will not be gradual but one of leaps. This does not mean that we should project for ourselves the tasks of a party of mass influence when we are not one, but neither should we project for ourselves merely propaganda tasks.

6. We disagree with the document when it says that the French section is the strongest and largest.

QUOTES FROM TROTSKY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSION

"Then I say, if they propose me as a candidate, they already know my program. If they send me as a delegate, I will fight for this program in the LNPL, in the Labor Party. When the LNPL adopts the decision to vote for LaGuardia, I will resign under protest, or I will protest and ~~say~~^{SAY:} 'I cannot vote for LaGuardia. I bring my mandate. Great new opportunities to make propaganda opening for us,'" (our emphasis)

Note: taken from "How to fight for a labor party in the US," (discussion on the Transitional Program, from "The Transitional Program for the Socialist Revolution." (Editorial Pluma, Buenos Aires, Dec. 1973, p. 84.)

"Keeping in mind the overwhelming power of the popular front supported by the big workers organizations, a small revolutionary organization had to adopt this approach, facing the masses: the popular front places before us the obligation to vote for it, with all its antirevolutionary plans, or allow the victory of the right wings if we put forward independent candidates. Let's vote for the candidates of the popular front. Our vote will not mean approval of that governmental bloc and its program, but the only repudiation of the right wing that is open to us. Immediately after its electoral victory, the popular front will become the main obstacle in the path of the revolution, it will reveal its totally reactionary character. The perspective for the masses will be to succumb at the hands of the popular front, which in that case will turn over power to the capitalist counterrevolution, or the popular front will succumb at the hands of the revolution. Not a single minute of support to the popular front! Let's prepare the taking of power by the proletariat and the peasantry!"

Note: From "Landmarks of defeat; promise of victory (Spain 1930-39)," C. Munis, Ed. Lucha Obrera, Mexico, D.F., 1948, P. 205.