

DEC 24 1976

X: PC

December 20, 1976

New York

Dear Mary-Alice,

I understand that you will be coming to the French congress at the end of January. I am enclosing a report for you on the fusion process between the TA and the TC so that you can be better informed about the background to what will take place at the congress.

Since the LTF in France has not yet drawn up a balance sheet on this experience (it is too early, for one thing), the report reflects my own opinions and not necessarily those of the French LTF as a whole. I am also showing this to Nemo and will ask him if he has any objections to circulating it in the LTF leadership. I will write to you about this later on.

Comradely,

Becky
Becky

Report on Fusion of Tendency C and Tendency A

At its December 11-12 national meeting, the Tendency C, led by the members of the French section who are members of the LTF, voted to call on its supporters to vote for the theses written by the Tendency A, led by Comrade Matti, a longtime member of the Political Bureau of the French section. The call to vote for the Tendency A (TA) theses was accompanied by a call to Tendency C's (TC) supporters to dissolve the TC and join the TA. (In France the theses are the final documents presented for a vote at the congress by each tendency.) In addition to agreement on the theses, the two tendencies wrote three line documents together prior to TC's dissolution on work in the trade unions, the women's liberation movement, and the youth movement. The line from these three documents is summarized in the TA theses on mass work. Thus, the fusion was a principled one, based on political agreement on the major political questions in the debate in the French section.

The TC will call on the delegates at the LCR congress to vote for about six amendments to the theses on questions of a secondary nature. These amendments were included in a statement written by the TC leadership, to be published in the bulletin, in which the TC explained both its fundamental agreement and its secondary disagreements with the TA document.

The combined tendency has 460 members so far, of which 350 were originally from the TA and 110 from the TC. This represents 20-25% of the membership of the French section, with a prospect for more.

The formation of the united tendency was the result of a long process begun last June. At the June 26-27 Central Committee (CC) meeting of the French section, comrade Matti announced that he and other CC members were forming a "work group" to begin writing documents for the next congress and to seek signatures for the formation of a tendency. At that time, he asked several other members of the CC, including Nemo of the LTF, to join together in one united tendency of the "opposition."

Matti's proposal sparked a long discussion in the LTF about what our perspectives for the congress were, and what approach we should take to collaborating with comrades who were beginning to break from the IMT. From the outset we were faced with important political and tactical problems. Our goals were to write documents applying the LTF's line to France, to win as many comrades as we could to these ideas, and to go as far as we could in the process of political clarification with Matti and the comrades around him. The situation was that most of the LTF's leading members in France had joined the faction only a year before, on the basis of the international LTF positions. We did not have a body of documents that clearly expressed our ideas on French political questions. Comrade Matti had agreed with the LTF on some of the most important political questions in the Portugal debate, but said he disagreed on our slogan defending the Constituent Assembly, our evaluation of the committees, and what approach

to take to the SP membership in the July 1975 period. He and comrade Nemo had agreed on other questions in the course of some CC meetings, such as opposition to the French section's "revolutionary unity" policy with centrist groups, what approach to the OCI and LO, etc. Nevertheless, in June Matti was still a member of the IMT, and it was not clear what kind of positions he intended to develop in the French preconvention discussion.

We decided that it would be incorrect to begin discussions for the formation of a tendency with forces other than the LTF without having available clear documents so that we would be able to see what the agreements and differences were. The LTF comrades wrote up a political resolution on the main political questions up for debate, and urged Matti to do the same. (Our political resolution was our first document, and was not completely developed on every question, of course, but it did set down our ideas on some of the main questions. Many of our points were further developed later on.)

Our proposal for political clarification and agreement before the formation of a common tendency was new to the traditions for pre-congress debate and the formation of tendencies that have been developed by the French section since 1968. The section's bylaws state that anyone can call for the formation of a tendency at any point in the discussion before a congress, but that to be recognized as a tendency you must have at least thirty signatures. Moreover, tendencies get special "rights." This year, for instance, each tendency was allocated 17,000 French francs (about 3,450 dollars) for budgets to be used to finance materials for internal tendency discussion documents, travel for spokespeople to present their ideas in general assemblies throughout France, and financing of national meetings (That is, the travel expenses for out-of-towners; it is the tradition in France that all travel be paid). Most of the money is used for travel. Each tendency was allowed a total of 280,000 characters in the bulletin (equivalent to about 42-45 pages in an English language IIDB), while individuals not affiliated to tendencies received only 50,000 characters each (about 7.5 pages). This is the total for the whole discussion period, which this year was five months long. All the minorities opposed these limits. They were justified by the majority with the argument that activist comrades and workers cannot read many bulletins.

What these regulations mean in practice is that comrades feel pressured to organize themselves into tendencies early in the debate in order to get the right to develop and present their ideas to the section. Thus, in the scramble to get thirty signatures, tendencies are usually organized on the basis of vague positions and are often very heterogeneous. Much of the real debate takes place inside the tendencies rather than in the bulletin in front of the entire membership. And since tendencies are not based from the outset on clear political documents or a longer discussion in the bulletin, but begin as groupings made up of everyone in the same "bag,"

it is a free-for-all to see which documents get published as the line of the tendency. Every tendency settles this question by votes, a sort of discipline applies, and comrades who abstain or vote against a tendency's majority documents can nonetheless remain members of it and present amendments to the documents. As a result, the final documents are also rather vague too, because usually compromises are made to hold onto the people who are trying to amend the line. And even when people disagree with the final line they stay inside the tendency in order to conserve their strength and carry on the battle.

In this context, our proposal to form a tendency on the basis of a clear political resolution that we all agreed on from the beginning was not in the "normal" tradition. We further proposed that in case political agreement emerged and a united tendency was formed, our political resolution and all other preliminary documents should be published in the internal bulletin in front of all the members of the section so that everyone in the organization, and not just those inside the tendency, would be able to see what the agreements and disagreements were. We proposed that there be no discipline in the tendency, and that all contradictory documents on secondary questions be published. This was the basis on which TC was eventually formed--we circulated our political resolution rather than a vague "call" for our signatures and put that into the bulletin. (Since under the bylaws we had to write a "call," to form a tendency we wrote it after the political resolution, and published it as an introduction to the resolution calling for support to the resolution.)

TA was begun differently. A "call" for the formation of the tendency was circulated beginning in July. But in our view this document was so vague as to leave open the possibility that comrades remaining in the IMT could agree with it. Although it proposed agitation around the CP-SP governmental slogan, the call did not characterize the Union of the Left as a popular front. The perspectives for mass work were reduced to the vague formula, "one united trade union tendency, one student movement, one women's movement, one movement to support soldiers' struggles, and one soldiers' trade union." (In France, the word "movement" frequently means organization, but it was not clear from this document what the concept was.) The T-A leaders said they thought agreement on this was enough to provide the bases for a "regroupment" that could further develop line documents on mass work.

During the five conversations we held with TA leaders in this period, we were not able to convince them that we should have a political resolution that included characterizing the Union of the Left as a popular front, calling for a break with the IMT's European document, or clear perspectives on mass work. For us, these were minimum political preconditions for a united tendency. The TA leaders on the other hand posed no political preconditions for us to agree with before entering their tendency. At one point some of them called on the LTF to dissolve, but this was dropped. At another, we were asked to back up on what they said was the LTF's characterization of the majority as "centrist." (They were not aware that this characterization does not appear in our documents.) But

eventually this too was dropped, and what we were finally faced with was an offer from the TA's leaders to form a united tendency of the opposition, but without political agreement in advance.

Thus we decided at the time of the ^{late} August CC meeting to organize our own tendency based on our political resolution, but we left open the possibility that through further political discussion in the bulletin we would be able to be in a united tendency. We presented 34 signatures and were recognized as the TC. Matti and the other comrades presented over 100 signatures and were recognized as the TA. A third group of comrades calling for the formation of a tendency around the "analysis of social formation" were recognized as Tendency B. The majority of the IMT comrades were deeply divided among themselves at this point, with the divisions somewhat parallel to those that had appeared between the ex-Tendency 2 and ex-Tendency 3 from the last congress. But they were under a lot of pressure (in their view) to form a united IMT tendency because of the prospect that the TA and TC were going to grow. So no majority tendency was formed at this point and their negotiations continued. The TD, led by the CC majority, was finally formed toward the end of September. But it continues to this day to be plagued by deep disagreements.

A significant change took place at the late-August Central Committee meeting where the tendencies were officially recognized. Matti and two other TA CC members, Griot and Thalou, resigned from the IMT on the basis of disagreement with the IMT line on Portugal and the IMT document on Europe. This was a big step forward on the road to political clarification.

At the same time the TA political resolution appeared in the bulletin. It was very good in many ways, left no doubts that a deep break had taken place with the method and politics of the IMT, and showed convergence with some of our positions. So we decided to put an open letter in the bulletin to TA centered on the need for a clear characterization of the Union of the Left as a popular front, the need for the tendency as a whole to be explicit about a break with the IMT's European document, and the need for further clarity on mass work. We said that agreement on these questions would give us the political basis for the formation of a united tendency.

In the meantime, a group of ~~thirteen~~ comrades around CC member Krasno wrote a statement in the bulletin announcing that they were joining TC. While they said that they agreed with our political documents, the letter contained an attack on the LTF, and worse, a sentence that implied that the LCR was in danger of becoming a centrist group like the MIR and the POUM. This group was accepted into the TC on the basis of its stated agreement with the TC document. At this point, three weeks into the discussion, the TC had about 80 signatures.

Our open letter to the Tendency A stirred things up quite a bit at their first national meeting ^(mid-September). They

had to respond. The result was that their political resolution was amended to include a clear characterization of the Union of the Left as a popular front. A resolution calling for a break with the IMT European document was presented but not taken into consideration at that time. The leadership of TA was delegated to respond to our letter.

This did not happen without quite a battle, however. In fact, TA was heterogenous. A strong wing (25-35%), composed of the comrades who were either hostile to the LTF or still close to or inside of the IMT, fought against this perspective, and fought against characterizing the Union of the Left as a popular front (the majority says its a class collaborationist front that still does not have mass support, and this is one of the things that permits them to call for a vote in the municipal elections for the Union of the Left in cities of more than 30,000 where the list is not headed by a Left Radical.). The main leadership of TA wanted very much to keep this minority in the TA, and so some of them voted with this group on the popular front question. (Some of the TA leaders also thought it was not "pedagogical" to say so clearly that it was a popular front.) A third wing, initially around 25-30% of the tendency, was moving close to the positions of the LTF.

The TA leadership began discussing the draft of the letter responding to the TC some ten days later. Two drafts were initially presented in their leadership. One was very fraternal, and responded positively to the questions we had raised. It proposed a discussion around the question of the "trade union tendency" (that's what a left wing in the trade unions is called in France) as the area where we would try to clarify mass work perspectives. The other was less fraternal and raised other questions (what was our position on unity of the LC and LCR, agreement that the majority was not centrist), and proposed discussion around the differences that we had over Portugal, the soldiers trade union, and entry into the MAS (the SP/PSU student trade union), as well as the pace at which a "trade union tendency" could be built.

The result of the discussion in TA was simply adoption of a combination of the two letters, that left in all the international questions for debate, but that at the same time clearly characterized the Union of the Left as a popular front and broke with the IMT European document.

In fact, it wasn't (and still isn't) clear what all the agreements and disagreements are on an international level. One of the leading TA comrades wrote a document on Portugal that was eventually voted by the TA. It contained a sentence criticizing the PST and the rest of the LTF for having found more "progressive virtues" in the SP than in the CP. The TA answer to our open letter raised questions about our policy toward the SP in the summer '75 period, the appreciation of the "committees," and our slogan on the Constituent Assembly. However these were only passing remarks, not yet developed criticisms. It is possible that the differences are very narrow.

On other important questions, like the IMT's "sovietism," and the need to raise democratic and economic slogans, the call for a CP-SP government. and opposition to the vote for Car-

valho, the ideas of the TA on Portugal were correct. Eventually we decided that we had to leave clarification of the international questions aside for the moment, and take them up later in the world congress debate. We thought that the agreements over Portugal were deep enough to justify going ahead at this stage with the collaboration on French political questions. The question of Portugal will not be voted on at the LCR congress, in any case, and is not part of the platform of any of the tendencies.

The TA letter gave us the opportunity to clarify our position on the characterization of the LCR. We did this in two ways. First, the LTF members of TC published an answer to the Krasno group's attack against the LTF, and at the same time polemicized against the ambiguity of their characterization of the Ligue, affirming that the LCR was Trotskyist. This characterization was then included in the second TC open letter to the TA ("A New Stage in the Debate"). But in our TC discussion on the content of this second open letter to the TA we had a long debate over the rhythm of our process of clarifying politically and possibly unifying with the TA.

The situation now was that the amended TA documents characterized the Union of the Left as a popular front, called for a CP-SP government, and broke with the new mass vanguard orientation of the European document. In the course of the discussion, the TC had adopted (but not yet published) a clear line on the women's liberation movement and was in the process of writing documents on the youth movement, the national question, work in the teachers unions, and balance sheets on the Ligue's trade union work. The TA had published no documents on mass work, but some contributions internal to their tendency had been written.

We still maintained the idea that we had to have basic agreement on work in the mass movement as the basis for the united tendency. This was important to further clarify the differences with the IMT's approach in the mass movements, and to fight against the tendency toward a workerist response to the new radicalization that had characterized documents written by some TA leaders in the past. Krasno, however, along with some other comrades who had joined the TC with him, maintained that the characterization of the Union of the Left as a popular front and a break with the IMT European document were enough, and that we should propose immediate unity on this basis.

The LTF fought against this perspective at the TC end-October national meeting, but we were initially in a minority. Many comrades were convinced that once the TA had taken a clear position on the character of the Union of the Left and the IMT European document, the correction of the line in mass work would automatically follow. Other comrades stated that if we went into TA right away we could combine with the "pro-unity" wing to win the votes on mass

work perspectives. By now the "pro-unity" wing of TA had the support of almost 40% of the TA.

Now the TA "pro-unity" wing was led by a group of people moving very rapidly toward the LTF. Most of them were from the student sector and were based in Paris--in fact, the "pro-unity wing" held a majority in the Paris TA. But our tasks in relation to these comrades were really the same as for the rest of the TA--to continue the process of clarification. It would have been a mistake for us to enter TA at this point and to make a bloc with these comrades because we would have run the risk of alienating a sector of the TA by imposing a majority vote through an organizational bloc on mass work perspectives inside the TA. The result would have been unnecessary friction with the TA comrades in the provinces and from the worker sector who had not yet come so far along. The correct approach was to let the divisions and differences that were appearing inside the TA unfold naturally through the continued discussion with the TC so as to clarify the political line with all of the TA.

So we put up a big fight on this question inside the TC. The formulation that was finally worked out was correct. In the same open letter ("A New Stage in the Debate"), we proposed that we begin immediately to explore the possibility of unification, but that the process would have to include writing common documents on mass work.

This was acceptable to the TA. The women's and youth commissions of the two tendencies began meeting to write common documents, and several leading comrades from both tendencies wrote a document on work in the trade unions. At the same time the two leaderships began meeting together regularly to work out the process for publication of documents and to map out the work that would have to be done to write a common theses.

In the three weeks that followed, the common trade union document and women's liberation document were published. A youth document was written but could not be published in the bulletin because of lack of space. The two tendencies exchanged observers between their various meetings. The TA gave copies of its draft theses to the TC leadership at the same time as they were given to the TA national council and rank and file. The agreed-upon process was that we were to present any amendments that we had in the period leading up to the final national meeting of the TA and these would be integrated if they were not contradictory to the draft.

At this point, the big majority of TA had the same positions as the TC on the key questions. But during this final process--the publication of the common documents and the discussion around the theses--some difficulties arose. Essentially what happened was that the TA comrades who were either against unity with the TC or in disagreement with the TC and the majority TA line tried at various stages of the process to present amendments to the documents or to the theses that were contradictory to the line that had been developed previously by the TA majority and the TC. These comrades now

represented only about 20-25% of the TA, but they were strengthened by the support given them by a part of the TA central leadership who wanted to keep them in the tendency in spite of the political disagreements they had with them.

Thus there were first some disagreements over amendments to the women's liberation document. But those amendments presented that were contradictory were rejected by both the TA and TC women's commissions.

Then there was a big struggle to amend the theses inside the TA at its national meeting of December 11-12. Over 100 amendments were presented, most of which sought to introduce vagueness on various points. The central TA leadership divided on these amendments. Some of the questions were decided with only a one vote difference. However, the comrades fighting for a clear political line won on all the important points, and the theses remained clear on the characterization of the Union of the Left as a popular front, a clear call for "CP-SP government without bourgeois ministers," a break with the IMT European document, and a clear line on mass work based on the three documents written by the TA and TC on common. In the end, when the vote was finally taken on the whole theses, about 20 comrades abstained (it was a delegated meeting, with one delegate for every three supporters). For the TC the fact that the TA theses were politically acceptable was the key.

The fight around the political line in the theses inside the TA was then extended to the fight around whether or not there would be unity. Here there were three things that happened inside TA. First there was a group of about thirty delegates who argued that two of the amendments that had been accepted into the theses were in total contradiction to the TC's line, and therefore unity was excluded. In fact this was not the case, for one amendment was correct, and the other, though incorrect, was on an analytical point that was not a central question. The majority of the TA voted that it was up to the TC to decide whether or not these points were contradictory.

Second, there was a fight around what organizational procedures would be voted to carry out the fusion. The majority of TA was somewhat inflexible here. We had proposed that it would be most correct to dissolve both tendencies and reconstitute a third new tendency on the basis of the three documents and the theses. The TA leadership proposed that the TC should dissolve and enter the TA. We had proposed that a general assembly of the two tendencies be held at the end to elect a united leadership for the united tendency. The TA leadership proposed that the TC separately elect its representatives to the leadership, as well as its delegates to the congress and eventual CC members, all on a proportional basis (with the election for congress delegates and CC members to take place separately after the fusion). The vote on these procedures inside TA was for the TA leadership's proposals, but was decided by only one vote, as many of the TA comrades felt that the procedures were unnecessarily sectarian toward us.

Finally, the "pro-unity" wing proposed that comrades who had abstained or voted against the theses could not be elected to the united tendency leadership, with the idea of establishing that the tendency was based only on political agreement with the documents. This proposal had been agreed upon unanimously in the TA leadership meeting before the national meeting, but when it reached the floor several central TA leaders spoke against it. It too lost by a small number of votes.

After discussing the theses and the organizational proposals voted by the TA, the TC leadership drew up a declaration to be put into the bulletin that called on its supporters to vote for the theses, to dissolve the TC, and to join the TA. The declaration put the emphasis on the basic political agreement, but at the same time announced several amendments that the TC comrades would present at the congress to the theses. These say that it was premature to launch a daily newspaper, that the LCR's call for a soldiers' trade union is wrong, that the OCI and LO are Trotskyist organizations; several other amendments are of a more analytical nature. The vote on this perspective was unanimous in the TC, though some comrades, including some who were previously for an early fusion without all the political clarification initially, wanted to refuse the dissolution of TC because of the rigid organizational procedures proposed to us by TA.

This whole process of unity stands in stark contrast to what is happening inside the majority IMT tendency, the TD. After formation of their tendency at the end of September, a series of groups have split from it or refused to join it though they say they politically agree with the TD or IMT documents. Two groups organized by leading comrades in Rhône-Alpes and Brest refused from the outset to join the TD, and organized "work groups." Then a group of comrades sympathetic to the ex-Tendency 3's ideas quit the TD. This includes two CC members, Dietrich and Wepler, but not Hoffman. This last group is pushing for fusion with the PSU and the creation of an organization that is "neither PSU nor LCR," nor affiliated to the Fourth International (their proposal is similar to the one Pablo made to the United Secretariat in his letter to Ernest). The group from Rhône-Alpes has started to work with this group, but thus far they have not formed a tendency. Their main disagreement with the TD seems to be that the leadership of the organization, mostly composed of comrades who were in the Tendency 2 at the last congress, has not drawn up the balance sheet on its performance since the last congress.

One of the most telling signs of the majority's troubles is the malaise that exists in the organization about getting into the TD and carrying out the debate. The TD probably does have a big majority in the debate, but it appears that only somewhere between one-third and one-half of the comrades are organized into tendencies (closer to one-third). It appears as if many comrades are simply not interested in the discussion, and want no more to listen to the majority's ideas than those of the minority. This reflects a general malaise in the or-

Fusion/10

ganization as a whole.

Where does the LTF stand in all this now? First of all, we are in a big tendency based on the political theses and the three documents on mass work (women's liberation, youth work, work in the trade unions), with which we agree. We think that these documents are compatible with the LTF's line as applied to France. Some IMT leaders have expressed the same appreciation of the line of the TA documents. But a big majority of the common tendency does not consider itself as LTF supporters at this time. There are many more points that have to be clarified, particularly on international questions and on our answers to IMT slanders on organizational matters. This is a process that will be speeded up once the international debate opens up (though we haven't discussed just how we will carry this out).

Second, the LTF comrades have won a lot of respect for what they did in this process, and from wider circles than just the TA and TC. Even many majority comrades respect us (if grudgingly) for what we did. We have finally broken the "cordon sanitaire" around the LTF in France, and it will be hard for the majority to put it back up again after the congress.

Third, the LTF is beginning to grow, and this too will speed up after the congress. We have won several comrades out of both the TA and the TC, and have a large number of potential supporters. Our goal is to have 60-75 comrades officially in the LTF by the end of February, and to have a couple hundred potential supporters. This will give us a solid base for the world congress.