

xs: PC

(TRANSLATION)

Political Bureau, Ligue Communiste
Révolutionnaire, French Section of
the Fourth International, Paris
January 6, 1977

Political Committee
Socialist Workers Party

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed you will find a letter from Comrade Michel Lequenne, a member of our Political Bureau, which we would like you to publish in your internal bulletin.

Communist greetings,
s/Robs
for the Political Bureau

LETTER FROM MICHEL LEQUENNE TO THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE
OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

This month, December 1976, I learned of your statement dated July 29, 1976. I am surprised and shocked at its particularly malicious and even slanderous implications concerning my article on the evolution of Lambertism published in Critique communiste, No. 7. Malicious indeed; for, having noted that "the article contains interesting material on what happened to the French section of the Fourth International in Pablo's time (sic)," the statement is quick to add that "the main objective of the article is to do a job on Lambert." It seems to me that the article was read through glasses colored with quite a bit of "dead-end factionalism." To back up your reading of the article, you take a string of characterizations out of context, which I agree manages to give them the appearance of insults. Your statement is all the more malicious and slanderous in that my article, which does not seem to have been translated (which is the only way that the statement's intended readers, the great majority of whom do not read French, could make up their own minds, not to mention the signers of the statement, most of whom do not read French either, although this doesn't seem to have prevented them from forming an opinion, which is a peculiar method for Marxists to follow), is pictured as offering "no explanation" for the survival of the OCI, limiting the problem to my "personal feud with Lambert," to which, for you, "the battles of twenty years ago" seem to be limited as well.

The first assertion is a lie. You may not agree with my explanation for the survival of sects in general and the OCI in particular (in France, since 1968, a good half-dozen far-left organizations/numerically as strong as the OCI have appeared, while the PSU, which is as old as the OCI, has many thousands of militants--for the PC of the SWP does this prove the correctness of their politics?); but you cannot say that I do not offer any explanation. One could say that my explanation is inadequate. That is what one reader--who has been expelled from the OCI--wrote me after the article was published. I think he is right, and I will supplement my article shortly with a public reply that will be published in the magazine along with this highly illuminating letter on the subsequent history of Lambertism and its present state. But what explanation does the PC of the SWP give for its survival? The authenticity of Lambertist "Trotskyism"? We would like to see your explanation on this. And if a correct line has been followed--since when?--where and how have they corrected the mistakes which the SWP saw so clearly in 1963? Was it by deserting the barricades in 1968? To read the attack directed at me, it would seem that the PC of the SWP approves the Lambertist line of supporting the leadership of the FO [Force Ouvrière--Labor Force] trade union, whose class-collaborationist policy goes to the point of breaking certain strikes, such as the strike by the Parisien Libéré workers, in the company where I have worked for 27 years--a policy which is nonetheless thrown every day in the faces of OCI militants

in the CGT [Confédération Générale du Travail--General Confederation of Labor] when they take it upon themselves to criticize the leadership of this federation. The PC of the SWP should be clear on all these questions. You cannot hide behind abstract references to Trotskyism, which, at least on this side of the Atlantic, are voiced in the most unlikely places.

But you say that my article is carrying on a "battle of twenty years ago." This remark is not without humor, since we know that what every new militant of the OCI-AJS (even sympathizers) learns, first of all and above all, is the "Pabloite treachery of 1951-1952" (learned in stereotyped fashion and spouted like parrots) and the indelible stain born by the entire Fourth International as a result to this day, down to its most recently recruited militant. In fact, it is because of this "treachery" of twenty-five years ago that the Fourth International needs to be "reconstructed" and that the OCRFI exists. The same letter from a sympathizer which I mentioned above expresses surprise, and rightly so, at the fact that, except for my article, we have never answered the falsification of this period of our history. In the OCI's only guest column published in Rouge, they did not fail to characterize our current as "Pabloite." All of this is sound proof that unless we go back more than twenty years in the past to take apart the myths, as I have done in my article, we would be leaving to the benefit of the Lambertists a supposed Trotskyist "legitimacy" to which they have no right. And that is why I made a personal decision to propose to the editorial committee of Critique communiste the article with which you find fault, and which the Political Bureau of the French section had no part in, being like you unable to read it before it was published (our organization's structure permits this, and it is good workers' democracy). And if I made this decision now, it is because it seems to me that our organization would not be armed for the present discussion with the Lambertists without being able to respond to their phony arguments about the past, and, conversely, without being able to call them to account in regard to their actual past. It is curious, too, that the PC of the SWP finds that there is so little to be learned about Lambertism in this affair. For my part, what I would expect from the PC of the SWP following my article is, if not self-criticism, at least a certain reexamination of the principles which led you to allow a split to be perpetrated in the French section in 1952, and then, in the circumstances recalled in my article, to tolerate the expulsion of this current, of which I was a leader, by the Lambertist clique in 1955.

If, for that matter, the battles of twenty years ago signify nothing to the PC of the SWP, why is it precisely now that you are publishing the documents of this period?

Is it perhaps because they can be of use, in the Lambertist fashion, in the fight against the international majority? This would explain your lack of interest in the documents and historical data which would demonstrate the fraudulent political bankruptcy of Lambertism.

Just as it is well known (by all the third-rate sociologists, at least) that Trotsky carried on a great "personal feud" with Stalin, which would explain the antagonism between Trotskyism and Stalinism, the PC of the SWP discovered that I am carrying on a "personal feud" with Lambert. All I can say is that you are wrong. I ignore "personal feuds" when it comes to politics, and everyone with whom I have come together again, after the most bitter disagreements in the past, knows this. My hostility to Lambertism is not directed at any one person--although individuals must be judged as well; on this score read Marx and Engels' correspondence on "personal feuds"!--but at a political line, not one of twenty years ago, but one which has lasted for twenty years.

The PC of the SWP vouches for the OCI-AJS having changed completely. All that I personally demand is to be convinced, but only by facts, which I would be happy to recognize, although they could not wipe out the past and the political law concerning the past, which is one of criticism and self-criticism.

Your statement reduces the errors of the Lambertists to a very narrow range (Algeria has become a passing transgression, and what then would the "post-Bellounis" experience be? A correct position?), and describes the current ones in minimizing, even approving terms. What I have done in my article is outline the continuity and discontinuity of Lambertism. This is what you must respond to; you must put yourselves in that context. But at any rate, who could refuse us the right to ask for an accounting from a leadership that boasts of its continuity, while claiming the right to call us to account for a past which is not our own, collectively, the leaderships of the present sections of the International, as well as the International Executive Committee and the United Secretariat itself being the product of a reconstitution of the movement, particularly by means of the 1963 reunification, and then the 1968 resurgence, and being composed, in their great majority, of comrades who either had no knowledge and thus no part in "Pabloism," or were educated against it in the struggles of 1962-65, or indeed--as in my case, but I am not the only one -- have never stopped fighting it.

The most surprising thing about the personal attack which you have directed at me is that you accuse me of "dead-end factionalism." That's a bit much, coming from you, since it is you who have constituted yourselves as a "faction," and

have conducted yourselves like one in such a dead-end way that you expelled your minority in a way that outraged me because of its bureaucratism, you who have employed endless maneuvers to block the functioning of the International Control Commission in this matter, and then violated your solemn commitments to reintegrate this minority. It was not a question, however, of a current which for twenty years had fought against our International, but of a tendency belonging to the international majority. A bit much too as an attack against me, since you know very well that I refuse and have refused to be part of anything which might resemble a factional functioning of the majority tendency (which the majority tendency also rejects, and there is ample proof); for example, at the Tenth World Congress, when I protested the scandalous decision, from the point of view of the political interest of our entire movement, to not recognize the LCR-ETA VI as the Spanish section, and the same goes for the LCI in Mexico. But we probably do not have the same understanding of what constitutes "factionalism," plain or dead-end; you probably think that the most cynical indiscipline with regard to decisions of the majority is not factionalism, that eliminating an opposition by conveniently expelling them is not factionalism, but that to call a spade a spade, and Lambert a rather pathetic figure in the labor movement, that is factionalism? (As if, moreover, there were such a thing as factionalism with regard to those outside the movement. For in fact this is the fundamental question. Leninism implies a strict distinction between being inside the party and being outside it. For now, the Lambertist organizations are on the outside.)

The PC of the SWP constantly alludes to the OCI's overtures to the LCR. But these overtures are nonexistent. The LCR, to this day, has received no request from the OCI with a view toward launching a discussion aimed at their reintegration into the International, or justifying its turn to that effect (which, it may be said in passing, would imply abandoning the notion of "reconstructing the International"--for how otherwise can we understand the desire to reenter a "destroyed" International, and to accept in principle the possible discipline of a "bankrupt" leadership, which a current loyally desiring fusion with us would impose on itself?). But if, despite the absence of avowed intentions--whose absence speaks volumes, nonetheless--the OCI still aims to reenter the International and to fuse with its French section, the LCR, why do they not begin with loyalty in practice and consistent unity in action with us in the many areas where we arrive at common actions with one or another of the various revolutionary organizations in this country, where opportunities for action are not lacking? (This is true today, as it was at the time when the OCI condemned our campaign to free Hugo Blanco because we would not agree to their demand that it be conducted in the name of the defense of a simple peasant unionist, and because we refused to desist from conducting it in the name of defending a leader of the Peruvian section of the Fourth International. A little "dead-end factionalism" on

their part, don't you think?) Intentions can only be judged on the basis of actions. The LCR and the Fourth International are waiting for actions which would make it possible to determine whether the OCI and its international appendage have really broken with a past of which my article hardly exhausted the course of its monstrous errors.

I expect that, due to your "democratism," you will make this reply known to all the readers of your statement.

With communist greetings,
s/Michel Lequenne
December 1976

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