

Report of the T.I.L.C. meeting December 2 -31 1981

The meeting was the most successful and important since the formation of the TILC. It spanned thirteen sessions on the five days - some thirty-nine hours in all - enabling the whole agenda to be completed and the adoption of six major resolutions. The outlines were agreed and a firm foundation laid for the December 1982 Conference at which the TILC intends to establish itself as a democratic centralist tendency fighting for the reconstruction of the Fourth International

SUNDAY DECEMBER 27: Two sessions

Attendance; Present - SL, (Britain);

- "Hackney Group " ;

TAF (Denmark);

LOA (Italy): new organisation resulting from fusion of GEL with ex- LC forces, seeking affiliation to TILC. Agreed unanimously.

AML (USA): fused organisation incorporating former SL(DC) - barred from affiliation by US legislation, thus a sympathising section. Cde P unable to arrive before Tues Dec 29.

Observer (cde Tsvi) from FIT invited by Secretariat following positive discussions in Paris in mid-December. Agreed that any future such invitations should first be referred to sections - if necessary by telephone.

Absent: Socialist Right (Australia): absent by agreement due to financial reasons. Had given report by phone and posted material (delayed by Australian postal strike).

Cde Rigal (France): personal reasons. Had reported on his work to cde Franco.

Canada: cde C had recently visited Britain but could not attend this meeting.

BOB (Chile): position to be covered under Secretariat report.

International Report: written report circulated in advance; up-dated by cde J (SL).

Points raised in three hours of discussion included clarification that we view Reagan's "limited nuclear war" policy and arms drive as mainly a policy of blackmail against the USSR bureaucracy in a bid to halt the limited expansion of Soviet power since the early 1970s. War is not the aim of imperialism - though its moves make war an ever-increasing danger. The military threats flow in reality from a defensive position of weakness - a last ditch attempt to retain control over key areas - rather than an offensive move from a position of strength.

There was a discussion on the extent to which the opposition FDR/FMLN in El Salvador can be described as "bourgeois-led". Cde Franco suggested that the bourgeois leaders are only figure-heads for a petty bourgeois organisation, with a very radical program. There was also a discussion on whether or not Trotskyists in El Salvador would be in the FDR/FMLN.

Poland: Cde Franco pointed to the emergence within the radical wing of Solidarnosc of contradictory currents - ranging from "neo-fascist" (a controversial term) to revolutionary socialist. There was also a discussion on how precisely to define the military take-over. It was agreed that the use of the term "coup" was not appropriate, but also that it was wrong to pose it as if nothing had happened inside the Stalinist apparatus. The old bureaucracy could no longer face up to the movement of the working class in

Poland: a new layer had to be brought forward.

Cde Jette stressed that two simultaneous tactics had been adopted by the bureaucracy. On the one hand they had attempted from the outset to incorporate Solidarnosc leaders into the bureaucratic apparatus; on the other hand they had sought to create conditions to smash Solidarnosc. They had not been able to incorporate the leaders as long as the movement maintained its momentum nor could they use military force at the high points of strikes for fear of mass mutiny. The containment of strikes had created the conditions for crackdown.

Cde Tsvi raised a number of points on the written report. He questioned the use of the term "antagonistic" to describe the chosen agents of US imperialism and its allies in the Middle East. The real antagonism is not between the Zionists and the neo-colonial rulers but between the Zionist regime and the masses of the Middle East. He also criticised the rather one-sided assessment of the Fahd peace plan, which leaves out its central element - recognition of the state of Israel. The plan offers concessions to imperialism, not to the Palestinians: that is why the Fez summit collapsed.

Split in the FI(IG)

Cde Minnell (ASL) reported.

The FIIC came out of the split in the USFI at the time of the Nicaraguan revolution. We could assess at the time that Moreno and Lambert were using the situation to carry through a merger without a discussion, but we fought to test the possibilities and to relate to the forces drawn to the Parity Commission and its call for an "open conference".

The Open Conference never happened. Instead the two sides adjusted their positions on a range of questions and constructed the FIIC as a body based on two large national organisations together with smaller organisations linked to one or the other. It was not a stable arrangement.

The problem was not that the fusion took place without achieving prior agreement on everything. The problem was the dishonesty of the fusion and the evasion of discussion.

Moreno eventually challenged the policies of the OCI towards the Mitterrand government in France. Challenged on its own home territory the OCI leadership responded bureaucratically. Indeed it seems there must have been a more or less conscious decision by Moreno to split, since the issues raised could have been raised long before. Points first raised in July without pressing them: then pressed firmly in October in such a way as could only lead to a split. Recent months had seen the FIIC arriving at positions through what seems to be a process of compromise - eg most recent statement on Poland which contains only one slogan (free elections) advanced not as a FIIC slogan but favourably quoted. Moreno's criticism's of OCI seem basically correct.

What should we do? propose we initiative towards forces that were drawn in towards FIIC, propose Open Conference - details depending on reports of possibilities.

Franco queried whether Moreno consciously wanted split - tho' conduct of each side layed basis for it. Moreno has attempted to press political discussion in order to win supporting faction in the OCI - but been met by organisational response from OCI. Difference of political character between old BF and OCRFI. Moreno and BF leaders absolutely opportunist but internationalists. Their focus on Argentine PST not through chauvinism but because biggest section. Moreno time and again in opportunist way seeks to advance towards international revolutionary party. But OCI led by small chauvinist bureaucracy - mainly concerned to defend their own positions in France.

Tsvi pointed out that the first moves had not come from the Morenists but from the Lambertists - in the form of a lengthy article by Louis Favre (OCI) on the anti-imperialist united

front in Latin America. In a mind-boggling article he presented the AIUF as the sole strategy, and spelled out that he meant grouping together all forces including the bourgeoisie in a permanent bloc - in Peru for instance to include APRA. Morenists argued for postponement of this article but published as a signed article! First move therefore began with OCI taking fight into Moreno's home territory. And discussion had also begun on Poland, with OCI calling for free elections and a Constituent Assembly and Moreno calling for political revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

TILC should analyse FIIC Theses which are the political identity card of the IO and represent total revision of Trotskyism. Even if Moreno is better than Lambert on France, PST positions in Argentina are no better than OCI line on France.

Cde Ali urged use of the TILC document on the Parity Committee which had been used to good effect by Turkish comrades.

It was agreed to formulate a TILC resolution on the split, for voting at a later session. Also to formulate the proposal for an Open Conference in written form for voting. The work that had begun on the theses of the FIIC should be completed with urgency.

MONDAY DECEMBER 23: There were four hours of positive discussion on the draft resolutions on France and Poland, which resulted in proposals for various amendments and additions. It was agreed to draft these in written form for voting on the final day of the meeting.

FIT/BOLIVIA REPORT : Cde JD (MSL) reported on his visit to Bolivia and extensive talks with Lora of the POR. Most of his points are contained in the written report already circulated to TILC sections.

In reply Tsvi admitted that the FIT has considerable difficulties in its relationship with the POR along exactly the lines raised by Cde JD. He agreed also that there had been difficulties on both sides in developing discussions between FIT and TILC. Two drafts of a reply to TILC founding documents had been prepared - but both had been rejected by FIT conferences. Not true that no attempt had been made to reply - but failure to complete the reply pointed to political problems inside the FIT.

However Tsvi did a) undertake to ensure that we receive a reply both to the TPITCS document and to the TILC resolution on the FIT by January 31; (b) propose a joint discussion bulletin be established on an occasional basis for discussion between TILC and FIT's European Secretariat. This he said was not an ideal formula but better than nothing; (c) propose that discussion should centre on documents or resolutions produced by each tendency on the problems in the class struggle, taking up points of agreement/disagreement on theoretical questions in this context. Finally Cde Tsvi suggested it might be possible to invite a TILC representative to the next FIT conference in April.

Cde Franco summed up TILC disagreements with FIT under four headings: the question of the "World Trotskyist Movement" and the method of reconstruction of the FI; the lack of an FIT balance sheet of the OCRFI; the need to clarify positions on the anti-Imperialist United Front; and the question of democratic centralism. Cde Franco went on to suggest that fusion between the FIT and the TILC would presuppose a break by the FIT from Lora and the POR: this was not the general view of TILC delegates - and was hotly rejected by cde Tsvi.

It was agreed to take up the suggestion of a discussion bulletin, and to pursue discussions with the FIT as a priority. At this point cde Tsvi had to leave the meeting.

CENTRAL AMERICA: A number of criticisms were raised of the first draft of the resolution. In general these centred on the fact that the draft combined in a rather unclear fashion a general discussion of the Communist understanding of the Anti-Imperialist United Front - including some unsatisfactory formulations - with specific

attempts to describe, and discuss intervention into, the existing cross-class fronts which are leading struggles against imperialism.

It was agreed substantially to amend the text in order to separate out these two elements and to make clear our orientation towards exclusion of the bourgeoisie from the popular fronts - while at the same time stressing the need for Marxists to be militant participants in the anti-imperialist struggle.

TUESDAY DECEMBER 29:

SECRETARIAT REPORT: Cde J reported that the secretariat had begun to function separately from the leadership of the WSL, with meetings held since the Summer. Section reports had been taken and preparations made for the December meeting - but most attention had been devoted to discussing the complex problems of completing the US fusion. A letter had been sent in November: and there were now positive reports from the US on the progress (not necessarily as a result of the direct work of the secretariat).

L.O.B.: A setback for the TILC has to be recognized. There had been great difficulties with the LOB for a long time - partly arising from a crisis in the LOB which arose before and during its affiliation to TILC. Partly also from mutual problems of communications - particularly with the Interior - and partly from the disintegration of the European exile LOB in Paris (which itself is related to demoralisation of Chilean Trotskyists that continues from 1973).

We received in July a document from LOB dated March, written after TILC discussions with leading LOB Interior cde in Paris. The document put forward a perspective whereby TILC had to choose whether to enter the USFI or the FIIC if it were not to become a sect. The document plainly leans towards the FIIC, in the context of discussions then taking place in Chile between the LOB and Morenoist Izquierda Socialista.

The reply was drafted by cde Franco - received in England for translation into Spanish in September. Then came a further major hold-up culminating in failure to secure a Spanish text. Eventually translated into French - but only in time to take copies to Paris during visit in December. Meanwhile the LOB announced its decision to fuse with the IS - on the basis of unanimous endorsement of the FIIC Theses.

The LOB in Paris has been liquidated: the only survivors are cde Juan and his wife who are left stranded. It is now necessary to say that the LOB is no longer a section of TILC - though we may possibly hope to win them back in the longer term.

Meanwhile it is important to focus on the need to build a TILC Chilean section. Possibilities with the Liga Comunista had not been followed up during cde B's absence in US. There are also ex-FIT forces in London, and a group around Fernando Marcos in Paris. Necessary to devote resources to pursuing these contacts.

Trip to Paris: Cdes Rinnell, O'Keefe and Cunliffe (WSL) had met with cde Franco in Paris and conducted discussions with ex-LOB forces, FIT, Lutte Ouvriere, and attempted to locate Morenoists. Cde Cunliffe had then travelled to Milan as TILC rep at LOR fusion conference.

Other Discussions: Cde Gordon (Canada) and cde Marcos (Spain) had visited England and discussed with secretariat members.

Documents: The first TILC Internal Bulletin now been produced - first in French, now in English. The amended texts of the "9 Points" Programmatic Basis document and the March document on the Parity Commission has been produced. Translation work has begun on articles from SO into Polish.

Correspondence: A letter written immediately after the Summer School to the Sri Lanka RWP had produced (in December) a positive reply and pressure for us to send a representative for extensive discussions. Our basic documents have been translated into Sinhalese. The Rwp's reply is now being translated into English.

Also a letter received in December from expelled Lealeyte grouping in Sri Lanka: TILC material sent to them.

Correspondence maintained with cde Sisi (Greece).

Letter sent after Summer School to remains of Australian IKL - had received fairly negative response.

Translations: This is still our major shortcoming. Still no Spanish TITCS. But there had been a step forward with Rwl producing Spanish texts of Nicaragua Resolution and Dec of Intent.

Agreed: (1) Commence monthly letter to sections; (2) Establish a TILC Public Discussion Bulletin, seeking news and contributions from all sections, together with resolutions, etc., (first issue to contain resolutions of December meeting); (3) Maintain Internal Bulletin - 4 issues needed in 1982.

SECTION REPORTS

Australia: Cde S reported on his visit and on expansion of group with recruitment of 3 new members, now giving work both in Sydney and Melbourne. Working extremely well under difficult material conditions.

Denmark: Expansion of group to 11 members: now bigger in Odense than Usfi section! Growth raises question of elected leadership structure since getting unyieldly to run through monthly meetings of members. Some questions were raised over TAF's election policy.

Britian: Fusion had brought membership to around 270 mark but there were still difficulties in achieving intergrated leadership as the driving force of the organisation. work is going forward on all fronts bur WSL recruitment is less than expected. Need for caution in view of labour movement witch hunting. Discussion on tactics in relation to mass party. Rwl raised proposal for WSL party press as "flagship" for TILC like SP had been: impossible to do this, but intention is for WSL Journal to appear regularly.

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 30

Turkey: Development of Solidarity work (Jogan Tarkan victory in Britian, and crisis of Stalinism help create important opportunities. New discussion bulletin produced. Question posed is establishing independant Group in TILC. Meeting urged cdes to take this step as rapidly as possible.

It was agreed to make additional resources available by WSL to help cdes regularise and expand the publication of their bulletin, and to carry more current political material as well as theoretical articles.

Italy: Fusion conference brought increase of 10 members, and plans for monthly paper in Jan. Report enclosed. There was some discussion over LOR characterisation of present stage in class struggle in Italy (as embodied in Italian resolution).

Canada: There was a discussion on the best way forward for cde G in Canada, and agreement to press for the publication of a Canadian bulletin as a step towards the building of a TILC section.

France: Cde Rigal working in LOR. In touch with worker-based opposition tendency. Necessary for Secretariat to keep in regular touch with this work through visits to and from Paris.

Observer section - Spain: Discussions with cde Marcos revealed that there is really no group constituted in Spain. Weakness has been refusal of cdes to join TILC as such, and their failure to do anything since the failure of various entry tactics.

Agreed to take steps to follow up latest proposals for a discussion magazine, and to press cdes to engage in active work as only basis for relationship with TILC.

Discussion on Political Prisoners:

Cde Franco moved GBL(now LOR) document opposing the use of the general slogan "release all political prisoners" in the context of Turkey, where large numbers of fascists have also been jailed by "even-handed" bonapartist junta. He advocated instead the slogan

"For release of all class war and democratic prisoners", as a means to break any illusions in the "impartiality" of the junta.

It was made clear in the two hours discussion that nobody was opposed in principle to the general slogan; simply to its use in the context of the Turkish situation.

WSL speakers argued in defense of the general slogan and its application in solidarity too, but made it clear that they were not advocating it as a leading slogan for work inside Turkey.

Cde Ali argued against "release all political prisoners", pointing out that it had not caused problems in British solidarity work largely because left wingers interpreted the slogan as meaning the same as the Italian proposal!

After discussion, all four TILC groups present voted to call upon the WSL (which abstained) to make it clear that by the slogan we campaign for the release of left wing and not fascist prisoners.

Anti-War movements: Agreed that the secretariat should draft an international resolution for use by sections in their intervention into these movements, which all agreed was extremely important.

December 1982 Conference - Launching of Democratic Centralist Tendency

Agreed that seven basic documents are needed as a framework for the conference, along with prior discussion and agreement of national perspectives documents for each section (a statement of what the group is; what its relation is to the workers movement and the class struggle in its own country, and what its objectives are in its work, together with its leading slogans). The seven documents are:

- (1) TPITCS - reopened for discussion.
- (2) Declaration of Intent - reopened - and a new Declaration needed for a Dem. Cent. Tendency.
- (3) Programmatic Basis "9 Point" Document - reopened.
- (4) Document on Crisis of the FI & our tasks - to be drafted by LOR.
- (5) International Perspectives of the Tendency - a new document to be drafted by the secretariat by early March.
- (6) Democratic Centralist Constitution.
- (7) Financial structure/organisation.

The general outline of the International Perspectives document submitted by cde J was agreed, with two stipulations: (a) that the bias of the document should be towards present-day assessment rather than historical assessment; and (b) if difficulties arise over the drafting which interfere with the fusion processes in national sections, a less ambitious document may be necessary.

RWL proposed (a) to table their document on Specially Oppressed as part of the discussion - agreed, but document not for voting at Conference. Rather should take the form of amendments to relevant documents. (b) Document offering general commentary on international democratic centralism: agreed - but again not for voting; (c) Document on imperialism and neo-colonialism. Possibly this might be covered by international perspectives.

LOR proposed brief document "What we are and our Tasks" - agreed.

Agreed that the secretariat should formulate detailed plans for the conference agenda - including a short text suggesting numbers of delegates, voting and other procedures.

Invitations: No other groups proposed for invitations.

Relations with other groups

Agreed to write to RWP Sri Lanka, pressing them to send us material on their positions, stating that we are proposing to send a delegation if our April meeting considers sufficient basis exists. This visit could be combined with talks with the ex-Bealyites.

LC Chile: Priority to follow up this contact. Also follow up ex-Morenist Chileans in Brussels.

Egyptians: Contact lost when their member in Europe left group.

Bolivian POR de PIE: Exchange of material begun. If we were to send cde to Bolivia or Peru for FIT discussions, could combine discussions with them and Lora. Priority to pursue this group which has no international affiliation.

Greece: Maintain correspondence with cde S.

Ireland: Seek discussions if possible with ING.

USA: RWL to pursue discussions with Freedom Socialist Party and report to next meeting.

FIT: Agreed that we should attach importance to Discussion Bulletin.

Voting Arrangements for expanded sections

1-20, 1 vote. 101-150, 4 votes.

21-50, 2 votes. 151-200, 5 votes.

51-100, 3 votes. 201-300, 6 votes.

THURSDAY DECEMBER 31

The final day began at 8.30 a.m to give sufficient time for voting on ammendments. It was agreed that there had been no real possibility to discuss Middle East/Iran, and that this discussion be tabled for full discussion in April.

Though there were differences on ammendments there was a high level of agreement on the main lines of the resolutions tabled for voting. As a result the following resolutions were carried.

FIIC Split - unanimous.

France - unanimous.

Central America - unanimous.

Poland - unanimous.

South Africa - unanimous.

Italy - 1 abstention (TAF).

Open Conference: It was unanimously agreed to "approach the Morenists and other international groupings, with a view to co-sponsoring a conference open to all organisations basing themselves on Trotskyism" on the current crisis of the Trotskyist movement. The Secretariat should report on developments to the April meeting.

USA (Extended section report)

Cde P gave a report of the work of the fused RWL which now has 54 members and is the new sympathising section to the TILC. He reported on the steps taken to resolve the difficulties of the fusion.

After the discussion it was agreed that the TILC accept the RWL PC's proposal that the inquiry into the situation in the US be left in abeyance pending the implementation of resolutions already adopted in the RWL.

At the same time cdes stressed the need for the RWL majority both locally and nationally to be flexible in relation to difficulties in the fusion. And it was stressed that the delayed perspectives documents should be produced as soon as possible.

Vote of thanks: The meeting placed on record its thanks to cde A (WSL) who provided excellent facilities and catering for the whole duration of the five days.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting of the TILC will be in London on April 9,10,12, 1982.

--000--

Cunliffe, 8/1/82.

