

Meeting of Trotskyist International Liaison Committee

April 9-12 1982.

Attendance: WSL (Britain); RWL (Sympathising section, USA); LOR (Italy); TAF (Denmark); Hackney Group; Rigal (France).

Absent by arrangement: Australian SF - written report.

Expected: Delegation from Spain failed to arrive, no explanation.

Agenda: FRIDAY APRIL 9: (3pm - 9pm) Secretariat Report
Organisational Discussion
Political discussion - extended on Falklands war.

SATURDAY APRIL 10: (9am - 9pm) Danish Report
Poland
Anti-imperialist front
Italian Report
French Report
El Salvador resolution.

SUNDAY APRIL 11: (9am-9pm) World Movement report
Discussions with Morenist LIT
Open Conference demand
History of FI - document
International Perspectives - draft
Australian Report
British Report
USA report.

MONDAY APRIL 12: (9am-4pm) US discussion
Hackney Group discussion
Falklands resolution
El Salvador resolution
Proposals on intervention in FI crisis
WSL Summer School.

Secretariat Report: J reported on some of the major world developments since the December TILC meeting. In particular events in El Salvador/Guatemala (see resolution), Malvinas/Falklands war, and Polish situation. Also reference to the rightward shift of the Turkish junta - releasing fascists, cracking down on intellectuals and hanging leftists. In Britain the working class faces a major crisis over Tory anti-union laws, which the TUC leaders are accepting.

On the work of the Secretariat, J reported that the first TILC Bulletin had been produced despite huge technical problems. Two monthly letters had been produced - and written reports begun to come from sections outside Britain. A draft discussion document had been written on the crisis of the FI and its history, and in accordance with the outline document presented in December 75% of an International Perspectives text had been completed.

As agreed in December an approach had been made to the Morenist LIT on our call for an Open Conference, and discussions had been held with a Morenist envoy from Venezuela - resulting in a series of LIT proposals to advance the discussion further in public.

The commitment to prioritise discussions with Chilean contacts had been carried out, and productive talks held with cdes of the LC and ex-FIT. The ex-FIT cdes had declared themselves largely in

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agreement with TILC documents, while the LC cdes had been slightly more reserved. Suggested that both groups should be invited to send observers to the TILC meetings (this was agreed but proved impossible to arrange).

Efforts to pursue discussions with the FIT had proved fruitless - no reply to two Secretariat letters sent since December proposing format for further exchanges. But material sent to WSL from Palestine FIT group.

Exchange of correspondence had taken place, both with RWP and ex-Healy grouping in Sri Lanka - but no further material available on their political positions. Suggested it would be premature without such information to press ahead with proposed trip to Sri Lanka for talks.

Greece: correspondence with cde S had shed new light on politics/ regime of Morenist tendency, and pointed to the use of bureaucratic/ ultimatic methods in place of political persuasion. Cde A to visit Greece end of May.

Spain: signs of activity from cdes, with advanced plans for publication, and renewed plans for publication.

Organisational discussion:

Franco: Steps forward have been taken in last 3 months. But TILC IB2 not produced, and TILC Bulletin needed in French. We should make it a priority to develop dialogue with Bolivian POR de Pie. If we go to Bogota to see Morenists, why not go on to La Paz as well?

Leland: Poor technical quality of material a problem.

Ali: WV Palestine more contact with us than FIT in Lat. America. We should promote dialogue.

Political discussion

Franco: LOR Secretariat divided 3-1 on Falklands. Majority view is for support to Argentina as underdeveloped country in conflict with imperialism, despite nature of the Argentine regime. cf TILC '9 Points' document, point 6. Reconquest of Falklands, irrespective of Galtieri's motives, is historically progressive. Question of islanders is secondary.

(Franco's minority view) - I see nothing anti-imperialist in invasion - simply a manoeuvre in which the correct position is revolutionary defeatism on both sides. But WSL (referring to initial statement) appears to start only from democratic rights of islanders. It is necessary to spell out that if the conflict escalated to an all-out war, then we defend Argentina.

Ali: Even medium development capitalist countries can hold expansionist "imperialist" aims - eg Turkey (Cyprus) or Iraq. Trotsky 1938 position on Brazil only relevant if Britain were threatening to invade Argentina.

Kemal: conflict weakens links between regime and imperialism. Wrong to call for removal of Argentine troops - since this would accept British rule.

Jette: important to know how masses respond to the invasion. It is too limited to see question as one of self-determination.

Leland: Agree with LOR majority. British attempt is to terrorise an underdeveloped nation into surrender.

Ali: In 1938 there was something for the Brazilian workers to defend in a war: I see no gains for the working class in Argentina out of the current struggle.

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Alan: Position of British imperialism motivated by (1) fight for authority to protect other enclaves - Gibraltar etc; (2) material interests - mineral rights/ Antarctica; (3) political situation in Britain - chance to rally support on a chauvinist platform.

El Salvador: brief discussion on level of commitment of Cuba/USSR to FMLN struggle.

Saturday:

DENMARK - written report circulated. Important development in Odense beyond level of propaganda work. Contact with Vargaites, especially around Polish work. Invitation to participate in Vargaite "March to Gdansk", and suggestion of exchange of space in papers.

Discussion.

ANTI-IMPERIALIST UNITED FRONT

Franco introduced initial text - explaining that a full statement would expand particularly on Point 3 - the last 40 years.

We cannot simply base ourselves on the (confused) document of the 4th Congress of the Comintern - need to assess subsequent developments. Importance of Chinese revolution in which Trotsky synthesised Theory of Permanent Revolution. As late as 1925 Trotsky was emphasising the impossibility of socialist revolution in China. China showed treacherous character of the national bourgeoisie even in the field of simply national democratic tasks. At the same time we must understand the necessity for a united front with the revolutionary petty bourgeois masses which often constitute the majority of the population in such countries.

The experience of the last 40 years has confirmed Trotsky's views. The national bourgeoisie has in every situation completely and openly capitulated before imperialism. National bourgeois parties - WAFI in Egypt and APRA in Peru have become agencies for imperialism.

At the same time we have seen the emergence of radical petty bourgeois nationalist movements which have also won support from urban workers - they have confronted imperialism and sometimes inflicted defeats upon it. We cannot avoid the question of our relationship to such movements.

In the struggle against imperialism and reactionary regimes we must make a sharp distinction between bourgeois nationalist forces limited by their class basis, and with whom we cannot make an alliance without losing class independence; and petty bourgeois nationalist forces with whom it is necessary for our own tasks to make united front agreements.

The Anti-imperialist United Front must, like the workers united front be a tactic and not a substitute for the building of a revolutionary party.

FIT position: we should distinguish between line of PO (Argentina) on one hand and POR on the other. PO bases itself largely on text of 4th Congress CI, and since that text is confused, so is PO. They say AIUF is possible - sometimes with petty bourgeoisie, sometimes with bourgeois forces. At other times they say that all that is possible is limited tactical agreements. Under pressure of Peronism PO tends to be opportunist - hailing return of Peron as "victory" for Argentine masses. But often also sectarian attitude to radical petty bourgeois forces - eg first resolution of FIT on Nicaragua.

We should remember that while the working class is large and a central factor in Latin American countries, the 4th Congress text was drafted for Eastern countries where the proletariat was a tiny minority.

4) (Franco on AIUF, cont'd)

POR different position, based neither on Trotsky or on 4th Congress. Must be characterised as a Bukharinite theory, of the "oppressed nation" in which the national bourgeoisie is obliged to put itself on the side of the petty bourgeoisie and workers against imperialism. In this bloc of classes there could be a struggle by the proletariat to win "hegemony" and "imprison" the national bourgeoisie.

This theory, shared by Lora, is false because national bourgeoisie will never allow itself to be hegemonised by the proletariat: rather it will use the bloc to smash the working class (China!) Theory is even more ridiculous because Lora recognises it cannot apply in Bolivia, where the bourgeoisie is so tied to imperialism that Lora can enter no alliance with them. He has developed a whole theory on Bolivian exceptionalism, in which the role of the bourgeois nationalists is taken by petty bourgeois nationalists or sections of the armed forces. There have been episodes in Bolivia where L has proposed alliances with bourgeois nationalist groupings: but this is not a consistent line.

However weakness of POR is that it holds AIUF as a strategy, through which it hopes to bring workers to power in a bloc with the Stalinists and other radical forces.

Discussion:

Ali: In Kurdistan, cde Franco's definition would leave us with only one possible group to ally with. The major forces are led by the bourgeoisie. In these countries there are bourgeois forces in a position to mobilise the masses. Way round this problem is AIUF. We don't go looking for bourgeoisie artificially: but in countries where bourgeois forces are leading an armed struggle against imperialism you have to have an answer. Of course in Turkey/Argentina bourgeoisie has no progressive role - part of imperialist control.

J : AIUF tactic, like UF was addressed by Comintern as proposal for use by mass CPs with other mass parties. This is not the position we face today.

Two forms widely applicable of UF tactic for Trotskyists - that of possible "entry" into larger movements in which masses are radicalising; or of "critical support" to struggles by mass organisations or leaders.

We need to question the application of the term AIUF where all that is involved in reality is attempts of small Trotskyist groups to arrive at a correct tactical relationship to large anti-imperialist forces.

S : Second Congress CI correct to distinguish between "revolutionary nationalist" forces - those prepared to struggle - and other nationalist currents. We must seek united front with revolutionary nationalists.

In backward countries revolutionary struggle must not be conceived simply as armed struggle but as political relationship to proletariat and peasantry. It is this which limits our common front with the revolutionary nationalists - not all of whom share our social programme, and some of whom will fight to the death against it. 1920 Congress spelled out need to strike together, but not in a way which cramps our political fight.

Franco: AIUF is an alliance, though not a global one which would abandon our own programme. It could even result in the formation of a joint government - the govt of Bolsheviks and SRs was an alliance.

Question is can we make such an alliance with bourgeois parties? Trotsky's answer on China was 'no'.

Conclusion: It was agreed to publish Franco's text in the IB and