

A CALL TO BUILD A TENDENCY IN DEFENSE OF T.I.L.C., FOR INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM



1) The TILC is now experiencing a profound political crisis. This implies the risk of a failure of our international tendency, undermining its possibilities of growing and intervening within the world Trotskyist movement, whose continuing crisis provides substantial room for action of consistent Trotskyists.

One of the central manifestations of TILC crisis is its failure to get transformed into a democratic-centralist (d/c) organization.

At the very time of TILC constitution, i.e. at the December 1979 Conference, it was agreed that d/c transformation should follow within a 2-yr interval, once the homogeneity of programmatic positions and their consistency with activities in the class struggle of the different sections would have been confirmed by joint work experience. Such a decision did represent an essential component of the political foundations of our organization. Indeed, it reflected the willingness to follow a consistently internationalist pathway, so rejecting past disastrous experience, especially of the anti-Pabloite forces in the FI, whose international federalism had meant one of the causes of their own progressive breakdown and degeneration.

Up to Spring, 1982, nobody did openly question such a prospect for TILC transformation.

The British section, following unification of the old WSL with the ICL, simply demanded (and obtained without any problem) that the Conference entitled to carry out the transformation be postponed to the Summer, and then to December 1982. — with the sole motivation of difficulties in preparation of documents and overall organization

- in particular, the postponement from July to December, 1982 had been motivated on the basis of commitments of leading C;des of the British section (and hence of the members of International Secretariat) due to forecast 1st WSL Conference on May 1982, as provided for at the very moment of unification.

Only at the TILC Meeting of past Summer, the turn of the British section leadership towards abandoning the prospect for short-term d/c transformation was overtly expressed. Reasons of such a change of positions are quite evident. No serious political problem emerged among the different sections before 1982 - on the contrary, the political homogenization process had made significant steps forward; no organizational difficulty had ever induced even one comrade to cast doubts on the short-term d/c prospect. The reasons of changing positions of the senior TILC section, and of the subsequent impasse of our international tendency amount to a single one, i.e. the WSL political crisis.

The crisis of the new WSL stems from its very constitution as a product of unification of old WSL and ICL, a move the leaderships of both organizations took with a manoeuvrist approach, not on the basis of clearcut confrontation and clarification of the respective political positions. Given the conditions of unification, programmatic differences could not help soon exploding within the unified organization, as it occurred in the Malvinas War debate.

Faced with the development of the WSL political crisis, the whole WSL leading group approached the TILC in an exclusively national and factional way.

The component originating from the ICL (its main representatives being C.des Carolan and Kinnell), whose political antecedents were characterized by empiricism and national-Trotskyism, having verified that within the TILC their political positions were opposed by most sections (with the only exception of the Australian one), begun to move towards indefinitely postponing the TILC transformation.

The old WSL leading group (that is, in particular, C.des Smith, Jones and Cunliffe), who instead of openly fighting for their overall political positions, chose the way of half-battles compounded by factional manoeuvres, having verified that most TILC sections were not disposed to follow them in such a dishonest, and politically bankrupt, method of struggle, and realizing that to carry out the struggle for d/c would have entailed a sharp clash within the WSL, in turn adapted to the prospect of an indefinite delay.

Such a situation resulted in the resolution on TILC adopted by the WSL NC on Novembre 13, 1982, and agreed in its main thrust by the TILC itself at the December 1982 meeting, the British and Australian delegations voting for, and the America, Italian and Danish voting against. Such a resolution is a blatant example of hypocrisy. On one hand, particularly on the end of Point 3, in purposely unclear terms the actual aim of the resolution is indicated ("Indeed by rigidifying the organisational structure as d/c without the necessary prerequisite of political agreement would probably lead to a scattering of the forces now grouped around the TILC"), namely, the aim of indefinitely blocking the TILC development until the British section (or better its leading group), in its national isolation, will solve its own internal differences, and then trying to impose on the other sections the political conclusions so achieved.

On the other hand, especially at Point 5, in order to deceive TILC and WSL militants, an attempt is made at presenting things as if the problems of our international tendency were essentially related to the impossibility or inability of the TILC sections to develop a sufficient international debate and to create a recognized international leadership. The conclusion is that if we succeed in solving the main practical problems of functioning, in developing discussion, and in making "sustained progress (...) on political clarification", then the Spring TILC Meeting will discuss the possibility to establish the d/c transformation in a Conference to be held in Autumn next.

The whole dynamics of the WSL and TILC crisis; the fact that such a resolution was counterposed to the proposal made by the American and Italian sections to consider the December Meeting as a Preconference in the prospect of d/c transformation of the TILC to be realized without any conditions in Summer 1983; the very text of the resolution, all show that this was only a hypocritical tool for hindering the TILC development.



In the course of discussion on d/c, the British section leaders expressed positions and raised objections necessitating an essential political clarification. The point is to specify what the d/c transformation actually means. The WSL leaders tend to present the whole affair as if d/c would essentially mean the existence of an "authoritative international leadership" capable of imposing its decisions on the sections as a whole, on the basis of centralist discipline. This is an one-sided view. Indeed, d/c is not a particular rule, to be painfully won: it is the normal method of functioning of revolutionary Marxist organizations, both nationally and internationally.

The historical experience of workers' movement showed that, in order to resist tremendous pressure from enemy social forces, to maximize results of revolutionists' action, to allow best understanding of the reality, and then to identify the best strategy for changing the reality in a socialist sense, the d/c is the best and the one possible form of organization. It particularly allows debate among militants and political differences to freely develop on the basis of discussion and experience, without hampering the activities of the organization. It is not an "authoritative leadership" that creates the d/c, on the contrary, it is d/c that allows a leadership, either national or international, to achieve authoritativeness, hence to develop its very capacity of giving binding indications — although a healthy concept of d/c privileges persuasion over "instruction".

To think that existence of an "authoritative leadership" is a prerequisite for international d/c is quite absurd, being tantamount to the idea that before entering into the water one must "theoretically" learn how to become an experienced swimmer — of course, it is necessary to have theoretical knowledge of swimming (we cannot say that we lack knowledge of d/c), but it is necessary, and inevitable, that the beginner boldly go to the water (possibly in a shallow and wearing a life-saver...), so testing his "theoretical knowledge". Initially he will certainly swim more or less clumsily, and only with experience will he become a master swimmer. Similarly, the TILC will only be able to build its "authoritative leadership" through actual experience of d/c, where the leadership will achieve true authoritativeness only insofar it will represent an expression (concentrated, and hence dialectically higher) of the debate and of the effective healthy character of the international organization.

The survival and the very nature of TILC depend on whether the primary need for d/c is met or not. The TILC is facing the dilemma: either to progress, in the sense of an actual consistent faction of the international Trotskyist movement, or to regress towards federalism and revisionism. "No change", i.e. stagnation, presently per se means regression and degeneration. This is fully in accordance with the bankruptcy of anti-Pabloite forces of the Trotskyist movement. The TILC foundation represented the first positive, overall reaction to such a bankruptcy. We want to defend this patrimony from any further liquidation. Hence, we issue a call to all sections, tendencies or individual TILC members, to join a tendency in defense of TILC, for international d/c, on the basis of the sole following point:

"The organizations, tendencies or militants, members of the International Tendency for Defense of TILC and International D/C take a commitment to fight in an organized form within the TILC and anyone of its sections in order that the next TILC Meeting, on April 1983, should convene without any precondition a conference for transforming the TILC itself into a d/c organization, within Autumn of this year. Such a conference should take place on the basis of delegates elected in pre-conferences of the different sections, who should vote in an individual way. This Tendency considers that, if the April Meeting fails to take the aforementioned provisions, it will be obliged to become a Faction with the same objective of promoting international d/c by winning to its positions most TILC members".

Milan, February 4, 1983

LEGA OPERAIA RIVOLUZIONARIA

Statements of support to the International Tendency are to be communicated to the following address:

LOR
via Pietro Custodi, 8
MILANO (Italy)