

April 21, 1971

Dear Barry;

Joe is leaving tomorrow morning for NY but I think that it is worthwhile putting a few things that developed over the past week on paper. Things are hot in Pakistan but unfortunately Tariq could not even get over here to present a draft of a statement to the U.S. We did however have Upahli here for the Ceylon discussion. But instead of his heading for that part of the world they all seemed intent on his making a tour of the U.S. of A to pick up some gold from the streets over there. With that offer not being taken up it looks like he may be headed for some Indian point adjoining the island. After a short discussion with him the other day at the office however I think that it is best that he shouldn't go anywhere near Ceylon or any other place where we have possibilities. He is one of these centralizers. He was telling Vergat and myself that the international leadership ~~is~~ is responsible for ~~the~~ all the problems in Ceylon--that instead of taking verbally correct positions they should have moved in at so and so date back in the 40s and several other times in the 50s and chopped off heads. I hope Vergat tells Ernest of this ~~little~~ discussion and they change their plans about sending him down there--with our hard earned money.

Joe is bringing the statements on both Pakistan and Ceylon back with him. Unfortunately they do not have any real information on either area other than what can be gleaned from the bourgeois press. We have not heard from Bala over all this period other than that long very general letter for public consumption ~~from Bala~~ of a couple of weeks ago. And there is nothing here from India either. With Tariq not being here to give us the benefit of his experience Ernest looked over the U.S. and finally asked Vergat to lead off--which on an extemporaneous basis he valiantly attempted to do.

There were the usual three or four items that are to show the recipients of the minutes that we are on top of all world developments.

But two items are worth commenting on. Pia contrary to the impression that Gisela gave me attended the Swiss ~~meeting~~ ^{meeting}—In the minutes this appears as a conference of the Swiss section. The Swiss here referred to are of course no more a section than the Uruguayans from whom we dissociate ourselves last meeting. According to Pia this was in reality a conference, called by the Ligue Marxiste Revolutionnaire—its purpose was to bring into the organization some elements who have heretofore been organized in a Geneva group called Rouge, (I am not sure of the name) If I got it right the ~~meeting~~ now combined operation is about 220 to 250 strong. There were 100 voting but I gather that the rest are emigres who for reasons of security cannot have formal membership. Pia mentioned the tremendous activity of this group—they are the mostouvrierist of all the European groups. He described how they hit the factories with leaflets—and then taken in their paper. They have good sales. ~~But~~ Pia said that ~~the~~ the leaflets deal with bread and butter questions and in the long absence of the union brass talking in these terms (the unions have had a voluntary no-strike pledge with the bosses since 1937) get a very good reception. Following this high powered leafletting the comrades ~~said~~ ^{read} the papers—and they sell ~~them~~ ^{well}—but Pia said that the paper is quite irrelevant to the workers experience and the sales are based on a sense of gratitude by the workers for the previous leaflets. He told the U.S. the result of a tremendous campaign the Swiss comrades reported to the Turin conference. We were going hell bent, getting what appeared to be a real response from a group of workers at a typewriter plant—when the trade union brass made a slight adjustment and like that—just cut us out!

Pia went on to talk about the general problem of building a Swiss section. It seems that the LMR is almost entirely confined to Lausanne ~~and with~~

The winning of this new group takes them into Geneva. Good—but sounds better than it is. This operation is entirely confined to the French area of Switzerland and obviously an outgrowth of La Ligue Communiste de France. The French only account for 20% of the population of Switzerland—the German speaking population accounts for about 75% and is concentrated in the main industrial areas. Pia described the group as being heavily petty bourgeois—apparently ~~with~~ ^{offering} a unique character—professionals lawyers, doctors engineers teachers ~~and~~ not coffee house types, very serious and dedicated—but petty bourgeois nonetheless. They are having their congress in September-October where they will take up the question of affiliation to the 4th. I understand from Gisela that this will probably bring a split in the organization but not a large one. This report was the most interesting one that I have heard—but was met with considerable irritation. It was not challenged however in anyway.

While we ^{are on} ~~are on~~ the subject of reports—I made a few observations on the German conference following a somewhat incoherent but largely rah rah, rah report by Gisela. All I said was I was unable to comment on the political level of the congress as the two political reports were verbal and provoked no discussion. In a few words I referred to David's contribution where he posed the three positions expressed around the youth document and how in our experience we were building not cadre youth organizations but broad action oriented youth organizations ~~with~~ largely student with the adult organization being the cadre organization. Also ~~made~~ made a few observations on the leadership situation—that they had only one professional and gave my version of the vote. Got corrected here by Gisela very heatedly but it seems that I was wrong...there were even more comrades abstaining on one ~~of~~ the two key votes than I thought—I had 2—she had 6 So much the worse. The reaction to my supplementary comments was explosive and now looking back I do ~~not~~ think that I should have bothered. Those who attend these meetings are pretty blind—and I have an idea how they present my observations to in this case the German comrades.

Intercontinental Press came up under publications. It was the last item and Livio had to leave in the midst of the very tense situation or his air ticket would have been invalid. They probably planned that it should be the last item for ~~they~~ created a very sharp atmosphere which if it had come up earlier would have thrown gloom over the entire US meeting. Ernst, solidly backed by Livio wanted to pass a motion, all duly recorded that would commit Joe to submitting all controversial material on Latin America to Livio. As the discussion reached a stalemate, Joe didn't give up at all, Ernst attempted to rephrase his motion—but of course keep its content. When Joe didn't budge chairman Charlier was astute enough eventually break the deadlock by adjourning the meeting. Pierre backed off too.

The discussion of course was very high level. I could only gather that (in reference to the Brazilian article) if we do not deal with a country over a period of 6 or 9 months, the article first to overcome our silence must state our position on some rather ABC matters—such as we are opposed to the police regime and their torturing of opposition currents. Both Ernst and Pierre tried to make out that the Brazil article was nothing but a straight attack on militants who are trying in their own way to fight the regime. They insisted on ~~stating~~ ^{stating} that the Urugayan group was not trying to participate on an independent basis in the broad discussions of the left on the problem of building a political opposition to the regime but actually was participating in a popular front sell-out. I ~~adapted~~ ^{adapted} to point out how their reactions were extremely factional, and talking about real differences of some importance referred to the bureau discussion I initiated on our attitude to the European farm question. When I said that it involved the application of our transitional program there were expressions of indignation however Ernst did not deny this—he said that the transitional demands sketched into the 1938 document on the workers and farmers alliance did not apply to Europe 1971.

Oh yes—the pomingo letter. The motion that I made that it be circulated in the United Secretariat passed as you will see from the minutes. Livio remained firm on his position that it was just a personal letter that he sent to a comrade. He knew nothing about the Urugayuan Committee head on it—in fact nothing about its circulation which was entirely the responsibility of the person who received it—without his authorization. Ernest-Pierre—said that they knew nothing about this letter—and from what I know of Livio I see no reason to question their word. Of course this matter could not go anywhere, even if we had wanted it to, without copies being available. The next move is yours.

A few other small observations. Earlier ^{following} ~~in~~ a report of the East European commission by Sendor dealing with our many language publications Pia asked for copies of the Polish bulletin. Apparently there are many Polish workers in Switzerland. Sendor embarrassedly said that there had only been one issue ever come out and that there had been many complaints about it—I gather ~~nothing~~ about the quality of its appearance. Ernest came in behind Pat's report on the British situation to counterfact the factual report I gave of his last U.S. report on the "bad" situation there. In passing Pat revealed that we are not carrying any effective work on that revolutionary struggle so close to home—Ireland. It seems that the Irish we are working with are quite demoralized. The reports on April 24 were marked by astonishing inattentiveness of the meeting—Livio walking around—Ernest making phone calls. It is obvious that the French Committee contains no forces outside of our own and if the British action amounts to much it won't be our fault. Livio expressed considerable irritation that ~~the~~ international press did not cover the Turin conference on a big scale. Sendor reported on the discussion of the conference at the IC national committee—I would gather. They thought that there was some interesting information exchanged at the conference but there was really no profitable analysis; that there were possibly some differences in ~~our~~ concepts of work between the French and the Italian; and that the French did not know what the strategy of the Italians on the trade union arena was, if they had one. This was not developed at all. I will have to try to pursue this when I go to Paris next. Despite the fact that I had only two weeks before challenged the attendance figures ~~in~~ Livio's report ~~in~~ La Gauche, Livio asked me again to say a few words on what I thought of the affair. The way Ernest talks one would gather that there may be some differences in drawing up the program for the next IEC meeting and world congress—if there are any he stressed that he is for dropping the project. Oh, yes, I had overlooked the fact that while the new forces that have come to the German group have just gone through a split experience with the IKD there was no balance sheet of this experience at their congress. Gisela in her report was ecstatic over the fact that no one said anything about the IKD and therefore it was a non-issue. Vergat also expressed pleasure. In my report I mentioned that I had learned from David that the SDs and ~~SPs~~ had undergone considerable growth in their youth movement. Ernest challenged the SP aspect—but really only to backhandedly affirm it—and then he disabused Vergat and Gisela about their happy frame of mind re the IKD. It appears that not only is it still around but has grown and has good elements according to Ernest ~~and~~ should be with us—he mentioned Brandt's son. Ernest in his report of the Swedish ~~we~~ ^{we} kind he addressed, said that there were 60 comrades in the group—problems though—the two key leaders are fed up, and they are holding off membership to the guy who made the main arrangements for the last WC and is the big publisher of LT's works. I told them that I will be in all probability going to Sweden and Denmark. They expressed pleasure. The day was saved by Gisela's report that Canada has sent in \$140 to the Bengal campaign and is contributing \$40 a month. That's it.

comradely
Ross