

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES, No. 17, April 3, 1972

Present: Breitman, Britton, Dobbs, A. Hansen, J. Hansen, Horowitz,
D. Jenness, Jones, Lovell, Novack, Rose, Sheppard, Stone

Visitors: L. Jenness, Kerry, Scott, Seigle, Shaw

Chairman: Lovell

AGENDA: 1. Statement on Argentina
 2. Election Platform
 3. Preliminary Tour Report
 4. Canadian Plenum

1. STATEMENT ON ARGENTINA

J. Hansen reported.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the statement (see attached).

Carried.

2. ELECTION PLATFORM

Seigle reported.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the general line of the election platform,
to be edited in light of the discussion for publication.

Carried.

3. PRELIMINARY TOUR REPORT

Lovell reported.

Discussion

4. CANADIAN PLENUM

Shaw reported.

Discussion

Meeting adjourned.

ON THE KIDNAPPING OF OBERDAN SALLUSTRO

A Statement by the Political Committee of the SWP

passed April 3, 1972

The kidnapping of Oberdan Sallustro by the Revolutionary Army of the People (ERP) created an international sensation, as was to be expected in view of Sallustro's prominence as the general manager of the Argentine branch of Fiat Concord. The sensational aspects were further heightened by the exceptional ransom the guerrillas sought from the government and the company, by the ultimatum of the guerrillas to place Sallustro before a "firing squad" if the terms were not met, and by the decision of General Lanusse not to "negotiate" with the ERP even if it meant the death of the hostage.

However, this particular action was only the most spectacular in hundreds of guerrilla actions that have been carried out in Argentina in the past two years by seven guerrilla groups of varied political coloration.

The rise in such actions is ascribable to four fundamental causes: (1) The economic impasse of Argentine capitalism and the efforts of the ruling class to find a way out by further depressing the standard of living of the working masses. (2) The imposition of dictatorial military rule and the banning of political opposition. (3) The use of troops and police against workers who engage in strikes or students and others who initiate protest demonstrations. (4) The arbitrary imprisonment of unionists and union leaders, use of torture on suspects, secret killing of persons seized by the police, imposition of abysmal conditions on political prisoners held by the hundreds in the jails of the country.

The victimizations under the military junta headed by General Lanusse have led to numerous international protests. We are in full solidarity with this campaign for the release of all the political prisoners in Argentina and an end to the repression.

The anger and bitterness of the youth in Argentina are understandable. Their natural reaction is to turn to revolutionary means to open up a new perspective for Argentina. They have been encouraged in this by the explosive social tensions that have given rise to repeated upsurges by sectors of the masses.

Unfortunately no mass revolutionary socialist party exists in Argentina that could draw these youth into its ranks and provide them with the most effective avenues of struggle. The example set by the Bolsheviks in preparing for the Russian revolution has become obscured because of the repellent policy of "peaceful coexistence" with capitalism followed by the Soviet bureaucracy since Stalin's time. Thus many revolutionary-minded youths are attracted to the examples set by Che Guevara in Bolivia and by guerrilla formations like the Tupamaros in Uruguay.

Under the influence of such examples, the ERP has committed everything to practising urban guerrilla warfare. In place of powerful actions by the masses themselves, the ERP is attempting to substitute small actions by a tiny group. Their hopes are placed on these actions serving as examples to the people living in the slums. They hope that the dramatic nature of the "exemplary actions" will inspire the masses to begin moving toward toppling the old regime and establishing a government of their own.

In reality the work of bringing the masses into the political arena in all their invincible power differs qualitatively from such notions. It requires deep involvement in the daily life of the masses. It requires patiently struggling, under the guidance of a revolutionary-socialist party, to project demands directly linked to the economic, social, and political needs of the masses, and to organize support for these demands in such a way as to raise the self-confidence of the masses and take them through transitional steps onto the road of a socialist revolution.

The primary task at present is to build a revolutionary-socialist party capable of providing effective political guidance in this process. Guerrilla actions like the kidnapping of Sallustro separate the revolutionists from the masses, divert attention and energy away from party building, and lead to unnecessary defeats.

Of the courage of the ERP guerrillas and their readiness to stake their lives in the cause of socialism, there can be no doubt. Nonetheless, in our opinion, actions like the kidnapping of Sallustro represent a mistaken course which we urge the ERP and the other guerrilla groups in Argentina to reconsider.