

O P E N L E T T E R

to the "Alliance des Jeunes pour le Socialisme" (AJS)
and the "Organisation Communiste Internationaliste" (OCI)

Comrades!

It is now six months since you approached us in order to discuss with us your project for a "Revolutionary Youth International" (RYI). Comrades of yours have visited us three times in all for this purpose, the last time to discuss with us your call for an "International Assembly of Youth" in Essen on the 3rd and 4th of July. We declared that we could not sign this call and have in the meantime acceded to your request to write a reply to this call for publication in your organ "Jeune Revolutionnaire." An answer to our contribution has been promised by the comrades of the OCI.

However the events of the morning of July 4th raise serious doubts concerning the possibility of a continuation of the discussion:

We had come to the congress with the intention of selling our brochures and papers, of distributing a leaflet and of ourselves making a short speech at the congress. We had received in advance and from a responsible comrade of the West-German "Junge Garde" assurances that we could disseminate our materials and deliver this speech. As to distribution of the leaflet, here we were of the opinion that no special permission was required.

Things turned out differently, however. First of all we were forbidden as "Pabloites" to offer our material for sale in the downstairs lobby of the congress hall, though permission had been restated to us but a few minutes before. We were thus forced to display our literature on the stone steps in front of the entry.

It is, however, your reaction to the distributors of our leaflet that constitutes an open affront.

We had composed a leaflet in German, French and Spanish in close agreement with the text of our reply to your call for the congress, where, under the slogans "For the proletarian class line! For the construction of the Fourth International!", we dealt with the goal of the assembly. Our point of departure was the fact that today, following the failure of the first three internationals and the abandonment of Marxism by Stalinism, revolutionary politics can be understood and carried out only as trotskyist. But the RYI was not conceived as a trotskyist organization but rather as a centrist mass movement. From the standpoint of trotskyist politics it was therefore necessary to raise first of all the question of the perspectives of the OCI or the "International Committee" (IC) as the case may be, whose organizations were to constitute the decisive backbone of the RYI. We questioned the claim of the IC to dispose already today over the "full program of world revolution" in the form of the "Transitional Program" and emphasized rather the character of the program as process, a character which can be realized only in the practical dialectics of the development of the class struggle and of the revolutionary organization itself. It was only through the rending asunder of this connection that the IC was able to attain to the assertion that it itself represented the continuity as well as the core of the

Fourth International. --The second major point of the leaflet centered around the class character of the program and of the revolutionary organization as its bearer. We demonstrated that the designation of the RYI as avantgarde-organization of all youth in reality amounted to a neglect of the class differentiations of young people and a separation of proletarian youth from the older parts of this class, and that therefore the RYI could not constitute a contribution to the development of a class program. The leaflet concluded with the demand to make the necessity of the construction of the Fourth International the starting point of the discussion and not to accept the RYI uncritically from the beginning as a component of this perspective.

We began to distribute this leaflet fairly early before the beginning of the major session of July 4th and, n.b., in front of the congress hall, not within it. Shortly before, comrades of the GIM, the German section of the "United Secretariat," had distributed a leaflet in which they praised the USec as the "true" Fourth International. (That we thoroughly criticize this impostor's claim and the revisionist line of the USec as a whole should be well known to you from our publications and also from the leaflet. Therefore we must reject as empty polemics and in the sharpest fashion your attack on us for "Pabloism.")

When we had disposed of perhaps 1500-2000 of our leaflets, your marshals suddenly--clearly as a result of commands from higher up--came into action and hindered us in the further distribution. Not only the fact itself but also the method is reminiscent of the practices of the Stalinists: we were shoved away, leaflets were ripped up, we were threatened with violence. One of our comrades was seized by two marshals, thrown down on the ground and kicked; a second comrade, who was hurrying to help him, was held back and threatened. Two of the marshals, who clearly would have liked nothing better than a brawl, stood out in particular here and could be restrained only at the last moment by one of your comrades (who evidently had more to say) from simply attacking our distributors. Nonetheless there can be no doubt that the marshals' orders allowed them any and all measures, if participants in the congress could not otherwise be prevented from receiving our leaflets. Things went so far that several of the participants in the congress had leaflets which they had received at our literature display taken from them and torn up.

The reasons which were stated to us for these actions are one and all not acceptable to us:

We were told that the call for the congress constituted its overall frame; we had, however, not signed it and so had placed ourselves outside this frame. Therefore we were not entitled to distribute our leaflet to participants in the congress. For then the "Stalinists could just as well come and attempt to distribute a leaflet"; this would not be permitted either. This conception was supported by a definition of "workers' democracy" by one of your comrades that would signify the throttling of any political discussion: in front of factories or in the unions, we were told, any political group could of course distribute any sort of leaflet; there complete workers' democracy ruled. But what was going on here was a "congress of the avantgarde" and as such could itself define the framework of its presentations.

But what kind of an "avantgarde" is it, for which the leadership has to prescribe what it can and cannot read and discuss? Is it perhaps still too immature, not advanced enough for the consideration of positions such as ours?

Another argument could only strengthen this impression: namely, that our position should be discussed not at the level of the AJS but of the OCI, since it was primarily a criticism of the OCI or the IC.

Nonetheless it accords with your official position, that organizations such as the AJS have no justification for their existence without the permanent intervention of the organizations of the IC. And although the OCI, the English SLL, the West-German IAK were not numbered among the official organizers, the initials of the OCI, for example, were displayed in the hall in the same size and beside those of the AJS and comrades delivered speeches in the name of these organizations. Therefore it is not only justified but also necessary to carry on discussion concerning the politics and claims of the IC on the level of the youth organizations, and it was in regard to this point that our leaflet constituted a contribution. Clearly, however, the comrades of the AJS etc. are supposed to accept the guidance or the necessity of collaboration with the IC not as the result of an explicit discussion but rather a priori and as a matter of faith. So it is not surprising that we were not permitted to speak at the congress, if this was planned not as a meeting discussion but rather as a gigantic display (which, however, did not turn out to be quite that impressive).

It is also characteristic that on the preceding day the Maoists were allowed to sell their material and on the Sunday itself (as already mentioned) the USec comrades to distribute a leaflet. Was it only that the corps of marshals was formed so late or did it only occur to you so late that our criticisms, in contrast to the other materials, exceeded the limits of what was permissible for the "avantgarde?"

Comrades! It is now up to you to take a clear and unambiguous position regarding the incidents of July 4th and to make clear your interest in a further discussion, your conceptions on the relationships of our organizations. If your interest is limited to winning us to the perspectives of the RYI, then you must first of all refute our position, which you know: must establish clearly what function the RYI can have in the construction of the Fourth International. This cannot, however, remain a discussion within the top leadership but, both for you and for us, must be extended to the broad mass of members. That we were hindered in doing this requires a public explanation on your part; those who were responsible must be found and called to an accounting. If, however, you should consider it correct to deal with us as do Stalinists with their opponents, then we shall not be remiss in adopting an appropriate stance.

Berlin, July 13, 1971

Leadership of the INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISTS OF GERMANY (Trotskyist)
Central Leadership of the Communist Youth Organization SPARTACUS

["The IKD statement on the events at the Essen conference is quite accurate."--Tweet, in a letter received 26 July. She was a witness personally to the entire incident.]