

XS: M.A. Dory, Jr, Jack Gus, B/C, Frankel, PS

the PALESTINIAN COMMUNIST GROUP.

APR 11 1978

Tel Aviv, March I, 1978.

To
The United Secretariat of
the Fourth International.

Dear Comrades,

As you know, our group - the PCG, which is organized around the theoretical organ "Spark", has been conducting political discussions with the local section of the FI, the Revolutionary Communist League, for almost a year now,

These discussions were opened by us with the objective of forming a principled frame in which the trotskyists, who are organized in three organizations: the PCG, the RCL, the Workers' League ("Avangard"), can unify in the United Section of the FI, with the perspective of building the revolutionary party, the leadership of the revolution in Palestine.

Since these discussions have entered a crisis, we have decided to appeal to the leading institutions of the USFI directly, in order to present you with the causes which led to the crisis, its nature and our estimation of the steps we must take in order to overcome this crisis.

Before describing the problems and the obstacles which we face, we see it our duty to present concisely our estimation of the causes which led to the forming of three organizations and their separate struggle for the building of the local section of the FI. A clear understanding of the general process which led to the factional struggle between the three organizations constitutes an important factor in our ability to supply a positive solution to the unification question, and to fo forward in the building of the revolutionary party.

- 1) The biggest problem the Trotskyist revolutionists in Israle face is the discontinuity of the Palestinian Section of the FI.

Beyond any subjective factor, we estimate that the main factor in the liquidation of the Section is first of all the victory of Zionism and the founding of the Israeli state in 1948.

The reaction inside the Israeli ghetto following the Zionist victory, the process of expansion of the state of Israel, while proceeding with the genocide of the Palestinian people and the continuous military threat on the masses in the whole area, left the few remaining trotskyists in Palestine isolated, broken and without perspective.

- 2) The turn in the international class struggle, starting from the mid 60's, was expressed in the Middle East; the 1967 War, which was the climax of the Zionist expansion and victories, has brought to the political arena the gravedigger of Zionism: the Palestinian revo-

lution, which is the vanguard of the Arab revolution.

Inside Israel, the only forum open to any radical Jew who rejects Zionism was, in that period, "Matzpen" (Israeli Socialist Organization).

Matzpen, which was a leftist radical organization founded in 1962, was the local expression to the deepening crisis of world Stalinism, and also, of the rising tide of the Colonial revolution which reached a climax in the victory of the Cuban revolution under the leadership of Revolutionary democrats, arousing waves of enthusiasm and opening new horizons for radical youth around the world.

The ascent of the Palestinian revolution and the principled questions that it raises, puts the different perceptions and half-programs to tests. The crisis that developed in the Middle East and the ascent of the Palestinian liberation movement made it clear that radical anti-Zionism in itself is not enough. Anti-Zionism that is not anchored in Revolutionary Marxist principles and program will necessarily lead to the political and organizational liquidation and to capitulation, brave as the militants who fight for it might be.

From 1969 till 1972 Matzpen went through a series of inevitable splits, in the process of which two Trotskyist organizations were founded, the WL and the RCL, leaving the remainder of Matzpen to leftist degeneration, its members adopting a hatred for Bolshevism which they grasp as the legitimate father of Stalinism.

- 3) This phenomena, the formation of two Trotskyist organizations, is to our opinion first of all a result of the crisis of the FI.

At the time of the formation of the WL and the RCL, the USFI was going through a deep crisis and a factional struggle, resulting from a policy developed by the Majority whose conclusions pulled to the building of the FI outside the working class. The very existence of the International Committee, after the 63 Unification, and the deep liquidationist tendency, led by the sectarian SLL, constituted a decisive factor in blurring the political sight of Trotskyism in Israel.

The independent existence of the OCRFI, which broke from the liquidationist tendencies of the SLL and found itself isolated and unable to organize internationally, gave in its hour a decisive weight to the difficulties of the WL's leadership to face the political reality in the area and in Israel.

The WL, which was formed in the International Committee, found itself, basically, in an intermediate position at the time of the split in the IC, although in fact it waged a struggle against the SLL and formed contacts

with the OC.

Herein lies the main source of the group's programmatic weaknesses and opportunistic trend in the question of the Israeli state's character, and also of a few sectarian, workeristic and economistic positions which developed while trying to penetrate to the working class.

The leaders of the RCL, on the other hand, entered the FI through allying themselves with the IMT. This fact dictated their strong sides, in contrast with the WL, as well as their weaknesses. Their very membership in the USFI enabled them to come to clearer and more principled positions on the question of the character of the Israeli state, and to a basically correct position on the 1973 War.

On the other hand, their political and theoretical weaknesses, which with we will deal later, were the cause of a permanent crisis that blocked the way to build a stable leadership and, in fact, prevented them from placing the perspective of building an independent Trotskyist party.

- 4) The debate which developed in the WL in 1976 and led to the forming of a third organization, the PCG, was opened by two comrades, Michal and Yigal Schwartz, who have been members in the organization since 1970 and founded the Tel Aviv branch of the WL, the biggest branch at the opening of the debate.

Internationally, the acquitance with the SWP during the Portuguese revolution convinced those comrades that the SWP is a Trotskyist party which has kept its revolutionary continuation; on the other hand, the experience they acquired in discussions conducted in England with leaders of the SLL led them to the understanding that this organization broke from all the principles of the FI.

In the local level, the civil war in Lebanon, the rise of the Palestinian masses in the West Bank, the Day of the Land, the victories of the radical national current in the Arab student's movement and cooperation with one of the student leaders, who later became an active partner in the PCG's leadership, led to the beginning of the confrontation with sectarian and workeristic positions of the WL, and afterwards to the formation of the Opposition which developed into the Palestinian Communist Faction in September 1976.

A stimulating and decisive factor at the time was the ousting of the WL from the OCRFI, on the basis of the inability of the central leaders to cope with a number of principled questions: the character of the Israeli state, the attitude towards the Palestinian movement and the position of revolutionists in Israel on the wars of the M.E.

The faction, which accepted those same principles posed by the OC, placed for discussion a primary document

called "Programatic Theses", a document accepted and supported by the leaders of the OC.

With the unprincipled ousting of the Faction from the WL, that is in such a way that didn't enable the political discussion to exhaust itself and arrive at a clear presentation of the basic principles on which the Faction was founded, it organized into an independent group and published its own organ, "Spark".

The Faction's objection to the method used by the OC leadership and the manifestations of irresponsibility in the debate with the WL, an early, premature ousting that constituted an obstacle for the militants for arriving at an understanding of the principles underlying the debate; created a situation in which, although the OC gave its political support to the PCF, the PCF is not its political official section today.

The PCF claimed that it considers itself as a part of the OC and does not have to appeal to be section of the OC, since it objected to the ousting of the official section: the WL.

The PCF estimated the duty of the OC then was to continue the discussion with the WL and arrive openly and honestly at a political and principled basis, clear to the militants of the WL and the other sections of the OC as well.

Another question, which constitutes a source of principled differences with the OC is the PCF's very definition of the joint declaration of October 1976, between the OCRFI and the US of the FI, as a principled declaration that constitutes a reaffirmation of the principles of the 63 Unification. It is our duty to clarify that these differences were not expressed and formulated in official documents.

In contrast These are the main elements, to the best of our understanding, of the picture of the Trotskyist movement in Israel.

- - - - -

In contrast with the RCL, we do not estimate the WL as a counter revolutionary organization standing to the right of the local CP, "Rakah", or that the unification can be fully based on the political continuity of the RCL.

Nothing is stranger to Bolshevism and revolutionary Marxism than an attitude of kiosk-ownership, especially so concerning the question of unification or split. One must approach a unification from a principled and programatic viewpoint, the question which we face today is the very existence of three Trotskyist organizations that find it hard to explain the principles and program separating them. The understanding of the main factors underlying the basis of the existence of three independent Trotskyist organizations is what dictated our attitude towards the unification.

We proposed the discussions aiming to clarify the principles of revolutionary politics in the area and in this country, as well as to apply them and the perspectives of building the revolutionary party.

In this clarification the militants who are organized in the PCG saw the basic condition for the existence of one unified organization on the basis of democratic centralism, not as a club of endless debates and unclear factional struggles. The political differences that have existed between the RCL and the PCG from the beginning put a question mark on the possibility of building an unified organization. However, the understanding that the RCL is making a turn, following the changes in the world Trotskyist movement, led us to continue and insist on the need to clarify those differences. Describing those differences as they rose in the discussion until today, would be in our opinion the best way:

- A) The RCL developed a strong inclination to pose the independence of the Palestinian revolution as opposed to the tasks of the Arab national unification. In contrast, the PCG saw the defense of the independence of the Palestinian revolution as a vital condition for the co operation between the Palestinian masses and their Egyptian, Lebanese or Syrian brothers.
- B) The PCG regards as one of the main duties of the Trotskyist revolutionists to defend and to fight for the demand: "For Unified and Democratic Palestine"; the slogan raised by the Palestinian national movement. The RCL claimed that supporting this slogan means "accepting in practice the theory of revolution-in-stages, without reservations" (See Letter to the PCG by the RCL, April 1977).
- C) One of the sharpest questions that arose during the discussion was the attitude of Marxist revolutionists to Nationalism of the oppressed peoples. In the opinion of the PCG, the RCL showed a misunderstanding of the dialectics of the consciousness of the Proletariat and the masses of oppressed peoples. The revolutionary Marxists' attitude discerns between the progressive revolutionary element in the Nationalistic consciousness of the oppressed masses, that includes the struggle against their National oppression in all of its levels - social, economic, political and cultural -, and the conservative bourgeois ideologic character of Nationalism, with which the National bourgeoisie, tied to Imperialism, tries to subordinate the struggle of the oppressed people to its own narrow interests.

Revolutionary marxists oppose the nationalist bourgeois ideology to its revolutionary aspects, within a consistent struggle for democratic demands, and demand enable the masses in their spontaneous struggle to reject the bourgeois ideology and to develop a classistic independent socialist consciousness. Opposed to this revolutionary attitude, the RCL has been entrapped within the opposite: a leftist and destructive attitude that opposes socialist

counciousness to nationalistic conciousness, the later thus becoming a lifeless block ~~making~~^{full of} inner contradictions.

- D) The RCL proclaimed to be an inseparable part of PLO, which it regards as an antiZionist united front. Whereas the PCG claimed that the PLO, with all its factions, is a nationalist petty bourgeois organization with a pro-capitalistic program.

Hence the PCG regarded the RCL's attitude as undermining the independence of the Proletarian party. The PCG also estimated that the RCL's attitude becomes particularly vague since it doesn't succeed to explain not even to a militant how it had become an inseparable part of PLO, nor what are the concrete political, or others, discussions between the RCL and the PLO leadership, or what are its concrete agreements with the latter. The PCG estimated that the RCL's attitude on this question obscures the understanding of the essence of action-front with nationalist organizations around defined issues. The RCL's attitude led its leadership to intervene in the political life of PLO leadership, recommending the ousting of Sartawi due to his attitude towards the Zionist left. This intervention in the political life of PLO leadership is alien to Bolshevik tradition and obscures the struggle bolsheviks have to wage against petty bourgeois nationalist leaderships.

- E) The RCL claimed that the Jewish workers have a double interest; on one hand they are part of the Zionist colonization and are interested in the Zionist state, but as exploited workers they are interested in the revolution. The PCG claimed in contrast that in spite of the political and economic privileges the Jewish workers in Israel enjoy, they constitute an inseparable part of international proletariat.

The PCG estimates that the RCL's approach blurs the perspective of how to intervene in spontaneous struggles of the Jewish masses, which will let them out of the trap into which they were led during the process of Zionist colonization.

- F) Another question the PCG raised was the RCL's unclear position towards the stalinist party, Rakah. In the RCL's press have appeared formulations such as: "Rakah's influence among the Jews has been growing due to its consistent fight for the workers' rights, against the anti-labour laws and for the defense of the standard of living of the workers". Or as it appears in a document presented for the unification congress: "...and (Rakah) was able to express the most basic aspirations of the Arab-Palestinian people and to fight its battle against dispossession and national oppression, in spite of its consent to the establishment of the state of Israel and its active role during its establishment..."

We estimate that such curious formulations are connected with strange suggestions of the RCL leaders to Rakah to build a common election front. Against this position the PCG holds the traditional position about the active

counter revolutionaty role of Stalinism, which is an obstacle in any struggld, be it † in the level of defense of democratic rights of the proletariat or the basic rights of the Palestinian masses.

- G) In contrast with the perspective of an antiZionist front, which according to the RCL forms the central strategy for independent mass organizing and for the building of the party, the PCG affirmed the necessity of a clear-cut separation between action fronts, which are built around concrete demands and in which every political current can participate including those that identify with Zionism, and the Marxist antiZionist program of trotskyists.

The PCG's estimation was that the concept of antiZionist front based on minimum program, necessarily leads to far-reaching political programatic compromises that lay the organization bare before alien class forces and constitutes an obstacle to the building of the revolutionary party.

- H) The very form of intervention of the RCL in the class struggle is a central point of dispute. If the marxist method means social thinking, social analysis and political action, then the RCL's intervention is permanent evasion of political confrontation, turning the RCL's intervention more than once into social intervention ~~combined~~ combined with diplomatic approach as a substitute for clear political line.

The RCL members evade a public and open appearance in the name of their organization. This was expressed in the Feminist movement where the RCL comrades play "hide and seek" with the movement.

Whereas the PCG regards itself as a propaganda group, the RCL's unwillingness to cope with the fact that it is a small group and its attempt to draw grandiose plans collapsing shortly, only lead to demoralization of militants and doesn't enable the RCL to face reality as it is.

- I) Viewing the section of the FI as a political, organizational and historical continuation of "Matzpen" (the former centrist organization from which the RCL after the WL had split) is a problematic and strange conception on the part of the RCL. Hence appear in the RCL's paper articles such as "15 years to Matzpen (RCL)" or "Tthe 100th issue", whereas to the best of our knowledge the section is only five years old. These articles constitute an especially difficult problem since they present the section members as trick players in the eyes of the vanguard of the Palestinian movement and the Jewish radical left.

- - - - -

These are the central questions which have been submitted for discussion since the contacts between the PCG and the RCL were opened. Trying to determine where we stand today, we must admit frankly we are far from clarity on these important issues that discussion on them leads in the final analysis to the principles of revolutionary politics. The

RCL has not replied yet to a long document, detailed, "Towards a principled unification", which was handed over to the RCL secretariat in June 1977, and which dealt with all these questions (see adjoined Bulletin).

The RCL's suggestion that the SWP Convention's resolution of 1971 "Israel and the Arab revolution" will constitute a principled basis for the writing of the unification documents remains unclear, as in view of the fact that the RCL disagrees with a number of central questions of this document; what are they? the RCL has not answered this question up till now.

If the political discussion was limited and we have not reached political clarity yet, in the grounds of common activity the balance-sheet is no less gloomy. During one year, in the course of which a political prisoners' hunger strike took place, as well as the Day of the Land, parliamentary elections, 10 years to the 67 War and occupation, attack on democratic rights of students and in the Arab villages, another attack - on the PCG, Sadat's 'visit' to Israel, ...the two organizations issued only one common leaflet! On the level of general propaganda work, after three common weekly meetings in Tel Aviv the RCL refused to continue holding them.

Dear Comrades, this is a realistic balance of over a year long negotiations. The most important achievement to this day was the RCL's readiness to finally recognize that the PCG is a Trotskyist organization and that the two organizations have a common principled basis. We don't underestimate this achievement. In view of the destructive and sectarian past of the movement that led to liquidation of militants, first of all by their inability to reach a clear understanding of the principles of Marxism and to pose realistic perspectives within the factional war; this is an important step.

Nevertheless, to our opinion and estimation, this achievement in itself is not enough to solve the political disagreements as they were revealed, just as it cannot become a substitute for creating an atmosphere of common and constructive activity and discussion.

In our opinion, the focal point of the crisis lies in the RCL's ultimative approach towards the unification, "the unified organization will be the organizational and political continuation of the RCL". It is our duty to clarify that our acceptance of such an ultimatum would be unprincipled regarding the question of the building of the organization, as well as irresponsible towards the militants of both organizations.

Bolshevism rejects any fetishism on questions of unification and split. A unification can be destructive just as a split can be. On the other hand, both unification and split can become a step forward in the building of the party.

The real issues are the principles, the method, the political analysis and the perspectives. Without them no real advancement can be done. Without them, the unification can become into demoralization to both sides. The tasks we confront are immense, the responsibility which our young shoulders must bear is too heavy for playing with diplomacy as a substitute for political clarity.

In view of the bankruptcy of PLO leadership, maximum clarity on the national question is required. Only such clarity can enable us to reach the tactics and the flexibility that are required to revolutionists who are fighting to penetrate the National movement and to become a part of it. No less important is the central task that faces the revolutionary organization inside the Zionist state, which is equipped with atomic weapons, improved oppressive apparatuses and no less destructive tools of propaganda and ideology. It is our duty to reach sharp political clarity which will enable us to proceed with the task of taking decisive parts of the Jewish workers away from Zionism, winning over the most advanced among them while neutralizing the others.

Obscuring our political sight with will lay us, a small propaganda group, bare before unbearable pressures and will turn the organization into a collection of militants fighting among themselves without a clear and principled basis, thus resulting in the complete undermining of our authority, in the eyes of the workers' vanguard.

No. We have no intentions of entering at unification on the basis of an ultimatum. If this is the first step of the unified organization, what shall we do when we'll face ultimatums of hostile social forces or traitor leaderships in the class and National movements?

The Re Unification of the FI and the Unification in Israel

In our opinion, the basic cause of the inability of the RCL leadership to take the political responsibility that is required of an organization which raises the banner of the FI, is related to the concrete situation of the unification process of the world Trotskyist movement.

In "Internatzional" n° 7 (theoretical organ of the RCL), M. Halevi asserts that "in contrast to Avangard members and to the OCRFI with which Avangard was connected for a long time, the PCG militants regarded the FI and its ~~sections~~ ^{sections} ~~chas~~, including the RCL in Israel, as a revolutionary organization with which it is possible and necessary to unite".

This assertion doesn't stands at the test of basic truth: it is well known that since October 1973 the OCRFI demands a discussion with the US of the FI and at October 1976 it signed a declaration that its aim in discussions is "the building and strengthening of the Fourth International as one organization..."

We are obliged to declare, the inability of the US leadership to face the OCRFI's address, discredits it in the eyes of thousands of trotskysts who are organized in the US itself. We estimate that the inability of the RCL leadership to tackle with the PCG address is the local expression of the difficulties of the US to live up to its political obligations and to open the way to discussion and unification with the OCRFI and its sections.

In our opinion, the basic solution to this problem is to be found in a declaration of the ~~of the~~ ^{SWP} secretary, Jack Barnes, : "We remain convinced that the correct course for the Fourth International to take is to say simply to the comrades of the OCRFI that they are invited to take part in the pre-world-congress discussion, on the basis of an unambiguous statement that they accept the democratic centralist framework of the pre-congress discussion and accept the authority of a democratic world congress and its decisions." (J. Barnes, "The Accomplishments of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction: A Balance Sheet", IIDB vol.XIV n°8, Sept.1977, page 23).

As an organization that is still connected in principle to the OCRFI we appeal the leadership of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and request to adopt the principled position of the SWP leadership. This step will undoubtedly decrease the factional tensions and facilitate the process of unification of the national sections of the FI in each country.

We estimate that the lower the factional walls between the OCRFI and the US of the FI come down to, the better the RCL's ability to tackle the tasks facing it and to abandon ultimative attitudes, will become.

We demand from the US leadership to cast its full political authority to strengthen the RCL leadership and to enable it to fulfill its obligations as a carrier of the FI's banner in Israel.

We demand to enable us to fully participate, as to the other organizations of the OCRFI, in the pre-world congress discussions and to acknowledge us as an organization of the Fourth International with identical rights and duties to those of the RCL. We declare, in our part, our full acceptance of the framework of the pre-congress discussions and accept the authority of the democratic world congress.

Concerning the resolutions that appear in the last letter to the RCL: a) We shall pass you the date of our next convention at the moment it will be fixed.

b) We take upon us to hold monthly contacts with you and to report you any advance in the negotiations with the RCL.

Adjoined to the letter are:

- a) A letter sent to the RCL, the last one, see adjoined "Information Bulletin" by the PCG, page 48.
- b) "Information Bulletin" with the documents exchanged with the RCL till today.
- c) The article "Begin's government sharpens attack on democratic rights", written following the attack carried out from the pages of the Israeli press on the PCG and the Arab students, see "Spark" n°4.

Sent by air mail to Intercontinental Press/Impres

Comradely Greetings

P C G

S e c r e t a r i a t

copies:

RCL secretariat

WL secretariat

✓ OCFI PB

SWP PC