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New York

Dear Comrades,

Here is a report on the French congress. It is partly pieced together from other comrades' reports, since I couldn't watch the whole congress (partly because we had to have Bureau meetings during it and because much of the discussion took place in the framework of tendency meetings, which we didn't attend, and one all-night session of the congress itself - yes, literally all night!).

which I didn't stay for

I sent some articles from the daily press that are interesting for the reactions they give to the congress. They all tend to stress:

1) the shake-up represented by the fact that the "historic" leadership of the Ligue (Krivine, Bensaïd, Michaloux, etc.) found themselves without a majority. They explain that the aim of Tendency 4 (the one including Michaloux, etc.) was to try to "recompose" the leadership and a new majority in the organization by bringing together the "historic" leadership current in the LCR and the "dogmatic" current (by this they mean dogmatic Trotskyist, including the Matti current, part of the old supporters of the LTF, people sympathetic to the OCI, etc.). of Comrades in the LCR talk this way too--that is, that the aim is a "recomposition," rather than a clear change in line to correct the errors of the past and a fight to win the ranks and the leadership to that new line.

2) the general atmosphere of crisis in the organization, and the disarray and lack of leadership expressed by the all-night sessions, constant breaks for tendency meetings, etc.

3) despite the confusion, the papers all report that the congress expressed a certain change in line, reflected in the fact that the Tendency 4 Theses were the recognized framework of discussion for a big majority of the organization and by the fact that the two main amendments to the Theses by Tendency 3 were rejected. These amendments were 1) one calling for maintenance of the LCR's past line of trying to build a "front of revolutionaries" and 2) one saying that since the March 1978 election defeat of the Union of the Left there has been a major downturn in the class struggle.

4) the fact that the OCI is and will be a major factor in affecting what will happen to the LCR.

In a previous letter I gave summaries of the main political positions of the five tendencies at the congress. One thing I didn't make clear is that Tendency 3 did not present a counter political resolution, but was based on amendments to the Tendency 4 Theses. This reflected the political confusion that still existed at the time of the congress. There hadn't been enough time, I think, to really carry the discussion to the ranks. Tendency 3 was divided, with some considering their amendments to be a counter line, and others not sure.

This confusion was increased by the fact that Tendency 4 did not fight for proletarianization. So it was not clear what they were proposing for the future and whether or not their talk about orienting to the mass of the workers with a united front line was simply more talk and no action like in the past.

It became clear at the congress, though, that for most of the T3 leadership, their amendments did mean a counterline. The T3 leadership is composed mainly of comrades from the Rouge staff, the comrades who work on Critique Communiste (like Denis Berger and Henri Weber), and some of the women comrades who were most in favor of women's caucuses, etc., at the last Ligue congress. The main spokespeople for T3 at the congress were their most far-out components; the two main reports for T3 were given by Denis Berger (who thinks the Soviet Union is not a workers state) and Michel Lequenne.

The discussion and vote on the T3 amendment for "unity of revolutionaries" was very interesting. The reporter for T3, Berger, explained how a "front of revolutionaries" can be an essential stage of building the revolutionary party. The T4 reporter (Robert) gave a very clear and devastating answer, saying that this line had been tested and found to lead to disaster, not only in France but internationally. There was a clear vote against this amendment, even without the votes of T1 (Nemo et al), which didn't take part in any of the votes on amendments to the Theses since they had their own counter-resolution.

Also on the "nature of the conjuncture," T3 was clearly defeated. Their reasoning was that since the March elections the bourgeoisie has the offensive, pushing through austerity policies that they thought they couldn't get away with before. In addition, the union leaderships have made a right turn and are making concessions to the bosses. This ~~was~~ shows, says T3, that the problem lies not only with the reformist leaderships, but also with the level of consciousness and willingness to struggle of the ranks of the workers, otherwise the ranks would be responding. They said we have to be realistic, that the defeat in the March elections led to a lowering of worker combativity and morale, and therefore we should pay more attention to the layers that have already broken with the hold of the reformist leaderships, such as the women's movement, the far left groups, etc.

T4 explained that there still was the potential for explosive struggles because of the objective contradictions of the capitalist crisis, and that the level of combativity and radicalization of the mass of workers did not derive automatically from "which class has the offensive."

All in all, however, the discussion tended to be very abstract--about "the period," about schemas for what is the united front, and so forth. There was very little discussion on actually what is going on in the plants, or about expressions of the ferment taking place in the CP. The only exception I remember was one speech by a comrade from the Lorraine. Even though he wasn't a steel worker, he tried to describe the

growing expressions of the anger of the workers there, despite the demoralization caused by the tens of thousands of layoffs that the bosses have gotten away with there over the past year or two.

There was also scarcely a single mention of any international questions in the congress discussion (except for Ernest's greetings for the United Secretariat and one speech by Anna Libera). No one mentioned Britain, for example, which was going up for grabs right during the congress.

Ernest's greetings were quite good. We had discussed them beforehand in the Bureau and he agreed to concentrate on 1) the framework of the world and European resolutions, including the turn, and 2) defending the stance the United Secretariat has taken to the OCRFI--that is, pointing to their sectarianism in not joining the FI. *(the stance of)*

In the middle of the congress a woman comrade proposed the calling of a women's caucus meeting. The congress voted not to have a long discussion on the proposal but to vote immediately, and then voted about 170 to 160 to allow the caucus to take place. This showed quite a change from the last LCR congress, when the entire congress was disrupted by the women's caucus question. Tendency 4 explained that as a tendency they took ~~no~~ no position on the caucus question because they thought it should be thoroughly discussed in the framework of the world congress discussion. Only about 40 women, at the peak, showed up for the caucus meeting, with several of them against caucuses and many others who were against or uninterested not bothering to come.

The discussion in the caucus meeting centered on the fact that the LCR has lost a whole layer of women comrades over the past year. In addition, recruitment of women is down apparently, and women continue to resign from the leadership bodies.

~~of them 570 delegates came to the congress and 11 had~~

There were 370 delegates at the congress. In the voting for delegates, T1 got 18.5 percent of the votes, T2 2 percent, T3 39 percent, T4 38.5 percent, and T5 1 percent. The vote at the congress on the counterposed ~~the~~ political resolutions was:

	<u>for</u>	<u>against</u>	<u>abst.</u>
T1	66	299	0
T2	13	346	6
T3	141	214	11
T4	142	204	29
T5	8	?	2

(In a strange procedure, the congress voted on each of T3's amendments to the T4 theses separately, with some adopted and some rejected, but then T3 submitted the Theses as amended with all their amendments in the final vote on the counterposed political lines.)

The congress also voted on stopping the daily Rouge and going over to a weekly. There was no time or preparation, however, for a real discussion of a balance sheet of the experience of the daily. Thus the majority of the outgoing leadership proposed to take the decision from strictly financial considerations (Rouge is fighting bankruptcy), setting aside a balance sheet.

It was decided to launch a youth organization; the founding congress is scheduled for mid-March. This appears to be one of the most successful activities of the LCR. They have published a youth paper, Barricades on a regular monthly basis for the past year, and have built up "Barricade Circles" of youth around the newspaper. According to Rouge, Barricades sells 4,000-5,000 copies per issue. They estimate there are 695 members of the "Barricade Circles" presently.

The theses on building a youth organization was adopted by 62 Percent of the votes in favor, 23 percent against (the Nemo people put a counterresolution on this) and 11 percent abstentions, 4 percent not taking part in the vote.

A heated debate took place at the end of the congress on whether T4 should have an absolute majority of the new leadership, since the Theses got a one-vote plurality. The Nemo tendency was in favor of giving T4 the absolute majority; T4 was divided on the question. T3 fought for a proportional representation. T3 finally won, but only because the Nemo delegates flipped over and voted with T3 after T4 finally proposed ~~that~~ that they receive a weighted proportion of the posts (that is, a few more than strict proportionality) rather than an absolute majority.

Everyone agrees that the discussion on political orientation must continue and nothing was settled by the congress. I think a great many comrades, including in the rank and file, are really looking forward to the world congress discussion to see if it can shed some light on what to do in France.

The OCI was invited to the congress for the first time, and the LCR is invited to the OCI's congress next week. The OCI comrade's greetings were very fraternal, stressing the significance of this mutual invitation.

Here are the figures on the composition of the organization.

- 2,204 full members
- 470 provisional members
- 711 women (28 percent)
- 1,056 in "red mole" groups
- 694 in Barricade Circles
- (on the last two, I don't know if this includes double members)

Since the last congress (2 years ago), 694 joined, and nearly 1,000 resigned from the organization.

Social composition:

Industrial workers	299	
White collar workers	741	
Engineers, technicians, or Supervisors	343	
Unemployed	111	
Teachers	584	
Students	421	
Technical school students	7	
Peasants	4	
Artisans	9	
	<u>2,519</u>	(this includes full and provision- al members, but not quite the entire membership)

That's about it.

Comradely,

Caroline

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