

New York, N.Y. 10014  
December 16, 1973

Dear Comrades,

Attached is the draft of a document we discussed at the Brussels meeting of the LTF steering committee members. The basic outline was done by Eddy, then edited by me.

As we agreed at the meeting, comrades should sit down and read the draft right away, and return it within a few days. If there are points comrades feel uncomfortable about, or that seem to be poorly explained, please indicate that on the copy you return. If you can add brief concrete examples wherever possible to illustrate the points being made that would help the document. In its present state, it tends to be somewhat abstract.

Comradely,

*Mary-Alice*

Mary-Alice

cc: Alan  
Anders  
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## ON THE ORIENTATION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL IN EUROPE

By Arturo, Dieter, Torben Hansen, Marcel,  
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1. At the 1969 World Congress, a minority of the delegates argued that the ultraleft turn on Latin America, if persisted in, could not help but have consequences for the general line of the Fourth International elsewhere. The IEC majority document on "Building Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe" contains a series of errors that stem from the same methodological mistakes committed in the "Resolution on Latin America" adopted at the last world congress.

These errors consist in taking the general tendency in the development of the class struggle on an entire continent and transforming it into an immediate perspective for every country instead of taking it as a framework for analyzing the different rates of development of the class struggle in each country and their concrete interactions.

This "analysis" is then used to rationalize and provide political cover for a tactic like guerrilla warfare, or "minority violence" and "exemplary actions," which is imposed on every section, both replacing and contradicting the strategy of building a revolutionary party on the basis of the method of the transitional program.

Underlying these errors is an adaptation to the political moods of the newly radicalizing forces ("the new vanguard with a mass character"). In practice this had included an adaptation to various centrist currents such as the Castroists, as well as Stalinist currents of the Maoist and Vietnamese variety. The hope that they can be utilized to forge an "adequate instrument" through which we can lead the proletarian revolution gradually dilutes the Leninist perspective and strategy of constructing mass Bolshevik parties.

2. We believe it is possible and correct to write a document on Europe analyzing the broad outlines of the economic, social and political developments. It is also possible to draw some general conclusions from this analysis that will help orient our sections. Such a document, along with others, outlining the principal guidelines for our work in such areas as the trade unions, the mass workers parties, student movement, anti-imperialist campaigns, women's liberation work, etc., would provide a solid basis for each section to analyze the situation in its country, develop perspectives, and decide on its own tactics and orientation.

3. Even on this level of economic, social and political analysis for Europe, however, the method of the European document contains some obvious errors. It fails to deal with such questions as the European Common Market, almost completely "overlooks" the Irish revolution, and virtually ignores the fact that capitalist Europe exists in a world context, where the European bourgeoisie plays a major imperialist role. It abstracts the class struggle in Europe from its dialectical interrelationship with the political revolution and colonial revolution.

4. But the European document goes much further than just drawing some basic conclusions from a general analysis of Europe: it actually deduces from it a categorical prognosis for all the European countries, as well as a "tactic" for building the party, to be applied by all the European sections. In his reply to Comrade Waters, Comrade Pierre Frank stated that only one short-term variant could be anticipated: the generalization of revolutionary crises in all Europe.

5. This schematic and oversimplified approach makes it more



difficult for the leaderships of the European sections to correctly analyze the political situation in each country. A combination of a lack of concrete analysis on the one hand and a transplantation of the European document on the other can only lead to (and in fact already has led to) significant errors in several European sections.

6. There is no question that Europe has witnessed a general upsurge in workers struggles since 1968, a rise that will lead to class confrontations of an even sharper character, inasmuch as the interimperialist rivalry is growing stronger and the economic situation is deteriorating. Revolutionary explosions could occur in several countries.

However, the European document devotes far too little analysis to the different rates of development of the class struggle in the various countries.

In this regard the European document errs in the direction of an exaggerated optimism by moving very quickly -- and in a very superficial way -- to link together economic crisis, political crisis of the bourgeoisie, crisis of reformism, and revolutionary crisis.

It is the same methodological error as the one in the Latin American document passed at the 1969 world congress. The general tendency for a continent has been confused with the immediate situation in all the countries without taking into account the profound differences that exist, the reality of ebbs as well as upsurges in the class struggle, or, for example, the influences that partial defeats in one or another country could have on the overall class struggle.

7. We therefore refuse to accept the generalization of revolutionary crises throughout all Europe as a certainty (and



a short-term one at that) or as the single variant determining the entire activity of every section. The political line for each country must be elaborated by analyzing -- within the more general context we indicated -- the evolution of the political situation in each country.

8. Moreover, the activity of our sections is not only determined by our general political analysis, but also by the size and political maturity of our own cadres and the relationship of forces with other currents within the workers movement. The European document tends to ignore these factors, and uses the so-called "analysis of the period" as a rationalization for abdicating responsibility for involvement in and leadership of other reflections of the radicalization which are in no way "peripheral" to the development of the class struggle in Europe, and in which our numerically small cadres can play a significant political and even mass leadership role: the student movement, anti-imperialist campaigns, the women's liberation movement, etc. The social roots of these aspects of the radicalization are ignored and the workers movement is exempted from responsibility for the tasks posed by all aspects of the oppression of the masses by capitalism.

9. The European document accords a great importance to what is called "the new vanguard of a mass character," and it defines "winning hegemony within this vanguard" as the present "tactic" for building the party.

We reject the schematic concept of three tactics for building the revolutionary party.

For a revolutionary organization that is still quite small, winning hegemony in the vanguard is not a tactic but rather a goal. And the IEC Majority Tendency gets itself boxed into a

contradiction when it anticipates a generalization of revolutionary crises but refuses to consider the possibility of the "tactic" of organic growth of our sections. Such a contradiction can only lead to a search for other forces and other means to resolve the crisis of leadership.

We also reject the document's positive assessment of the third "tactic," entryism sui generis, an orientation that resulted in catastrophe for several European sections. The entryism "tactic" stemmed from the same methodological errors that have today produced the "strategy of armed struggle" and the adaptation to the "new mass vanguard." A general analysis was turned into a categorical prediction; a single "tactic for the period" was imposed on all sections; when it was recognized that the political analysis that had originally served to justify the initiation of the tactic was no longer valid, other justifications for continuing the "tactic" were found; and over time the tactic became transformed into a strategy for party building, rather than a tactic within the Leninist strategy for party building.

Our concept of building the party is not one of applying a series of "tactics" which change according to the "period," but a unified strategy based on the dynamics of the mobilization of the working masses through advancing their class independence and strength -- the method of the transitional program.

10. It is extremely important for building revolutionary parties in Europe today to understand that a broad layer of radicalized youth and growing layers of workers are escaping the direct control of the Stalinist and Social-Democratic leaders of the working class. They constitute an "operative factor" open to accepting our leadership in action, and permitting us to

demonstrate in practice the value of our program and our principled class-struggle methods of action.

11. But the IEC majority immediately and very superficially calls this a "vanguard." The notion of a "vanguard of a mass character" attempts to include elements as different from one another sociologically as radicalized student youth and radicalized workers, and elements as different from one another politically as Trotskyists, Maoists, anarchists, and various centrists.

The elaboration of our political line becomes completely impossible if it doesn't begin on the basis of these differentiations. For example, it is possible to hold demonstrations with Maoists on concrete issues, around concrete demands. But it is much more difficult to work with them in the trade unions, or even to jointly intervene in a reformist-led demonstration. It is easier to build a class-struggle trade-union tendency with politically unorganized workers than to try to work among trade-union militants with unorganized radical students.

12. We must take into account both the power of the newly radicalized layers that can be mobilized in specific actions such as demonstrations and campus occupations, and all their weaknesses insofar as work toward our strategic objective is concerned -- that is, winning the leadership of the majority of the working class. This objective requires a correct orientation toward the mass workers organizations.

Two symmetrical errors must be avoided. One is overestimating the hold which the reformist leaders of the working class exercise over the masses of organized workers and failing to recognize the deep contradictions which exist between the ranks of the workers organizations and their bureaucratic mis-



leaders (cf. the attitude of En Marcha towards the Comisiones Obreras). It is these contradictions we must exploit in our battle to win the day-by-day leadership of the struggles of our class.

The other is underestimating the hold and pressure which these same reformist leaderships exercise over the "new vanguard of a mass character," pressures which can lead that "vanguard" (and our forces along with them) to adapt to the Stalinists and Social Democrats (c f. the position of the Ligue Communiste toward the Union of the Left at the time of the March 1973 elections).

Both errors produce the same result: abdication of our responsibility to combat the reformist leaderships of the working class on a day-to-day, struggle-by-struggle basis, turning over the leadership of the immediate battles of the class to the reformists, and substituting the mobilization of the "vanguard" in action for the need to advance the independent mobilization of the class.

13. The programmatic basis on which we are struggling to win hegemony in the "vanguard" remains extremely vague. Apart from workers control, which risks being transformed into a fetish, it contains very few immediate, democratic or transitional demands. For example, the key demand of a workers (and farmers) government is treated very superficially, although it can become centrally important for several sections in the period ahead.

There is a vast gulf between the present situation and a revolutionary crisis and a situation of dual power. The comrades who ask "How should we carry out work in the trade unions?" or "What principles should the platform of a trade-union tendency

be based on?" or "Do we need a combat program for the sections today? If so, what questions should be included in it?" will find very little in the way of answers in the European document.

14. In the European document our central task is defined as winning hegemony in the "new vanguard," rather than winning the leadership of the class. (Leadership of the class will be achieved at a later stage through the dramatic actions that this "vanguard" under our hegemony will engage in.) Thus our strategic task of building a mass Leninist party capable of leading the workers movement is reduced to little more than an ideological reference. This leads the IEC majority to consider what it calls the "vanguard of a mass character" in isolation from the masses that a genuine vanguard must be capable of winning over. In this sense, the IEC majority sees our relationship to the radicalized youth and workers as a tactic, a lever to use to get around the reformist leaderships. The risk of becoming blind to the "vanguard's" limitations and of gradually adapting to these limitations is great -- as has already been seen in relationship to Guevaratism, Vietnamese Stalinism, the Union of the Left, etc.

15. This adaptation has shown itself very clearly in several incorrect concepts of the IEC majority.

a. The fact that it advocates national campaigns "corresponding to the concerns of the vanguard." This has already led to obvious errors in Irish work, in Vietnam work, and has frequently hampered the building of mass movements based on the objective needs of the masses and the objective needs of the class struggle. This erroneous course can only become deepened now that Comrade Frank has explained that the "'concerns' of the vanguard are the needs of the masses" in Europe today.

b. In more general terms, this leads to a propagandistic,

maximalist approach to the class struggle that can only appear as abstract except in rather restricted politicized circles. An example of this is the recent election campaign of the ex-Ligue Communiste, which was focused almost exclusively around explaining "there is no peaceful road to socialism," rather than centering on a rounded program to answer the objective needs of the class struggle, including immediate and democratic as well as transitional demands that could facilitate moving toward the dictatorship of the proletariat. This propagandistic approach, which by definition can only influence a "vanguard," while failing to educate it concerning the task of winning the leadership of the class through the method of the transitional program, is called the "line of building the organization" (probably in the first stage).

c. The simplistic and therefore misleading theory of "unity in action -- outflanking" which in most cases (when we see the political components which take part in this) leads to unity in action with other organizations which are labeled "leftist."

It is clear that in many cases it is important to seek unity in action, even if limited to "leftists," in order to be able to mobilize the radicalized youth for specific actions and campaigns on specific demands.

But this means seeing the demonstrations and actions that we hold with other far-left organizations as tactical operations within the framework of our strategic task. In this sense it doesn't mean simply outflanking the reformist leaderships, but also using these mobilizations in our struggle to replace them. There is no shortcut around the reformist leaders of the mass workers organizations; the path to leadership of the class goes



through struggle against them in these organizations.

A correct concept of the united front is indispensable for this. The platform on which common work is to be carried out should take the following considerations into account:

-- it must be based on the objective needs of the class struggle;

-- it must be understandable to the masses -- who, alas, still follow the reformist leaderships -- even if they do not participate in the beginning.

Above all, we must avoid the approach: "There aren't very many people here; apart from us there's only the Maoists and other far-left currents. Let's bring out our full, maximum program and march under the slogan 'The only solution: Revolution!'" This was the error that marked our Chile solidarity campaign in several countries, as well as the Lip solidarity campaign in France.

Such an approach in effect abdicates the struggle for leadership of the day-to-day battles of the working masses and leaves them in the hands of the reformists. It reflects an inability to work out a program to combat the reformist leaders, a search for a fast route to "outflank" them.

We must convince the most politically conscious layers that the goal is to mobilize the masses. This implies a political battle against those elements who would substitute their own consciousness and concerns for those of the masses.

Unity in action and united fronts must always aim toward involving the other workers organizations (the CP, the Social Democrats, sectors of the trade-union movement) and their rank and file -- regardless of whether or not this can yet be achieved. The purpose of these action fronts is to advance the independent

mobilization of the class, not to organize the vanguard separate from the class. These fronts should be seen in the long-term perspective of unifying and mobilizing the working class under the leadership of the mass revolutionary Marxist party around a system of demands that provides a bridge from the present to the program of the socialist revolution.

d. "Exemplary actions" and "minority violence."

The term "exemplary action" is used by the IEC majority to obscure and confuse two politically incompatible orientations. It includes politically correct initiatives which point the way forward for the masses of the working class -- such as the "exemplary" action taken by the Lip workers or the building of the antiwar movement in the United States. But on the other hand it is also used by the IEC majority to refer to actions which are in no way based on a conception of leading the mobilization of the class and its allies in struggle. This includes actions such as throwing Molotov cocktails at the Argentine embassy in Paris at the time of the Trelew massacre, or the kidnapping and execution of Sallustro. Through Comrade Pierre Frank's document, the comrades of the IEC majority have now explained that in their view such actions are of vital importance in raising the level of consciousness of the masses.

16. The IEC majority's errors taken as a whole -- including their errors on the "new vanguard of a mass character" and their error of downplaying the strategic task of winning leadership of the working class, which are linked together -- have led the IEC majority to revise (at least in practice, though here and there in theory too) the two fundamental points of Trotskyism: the method of the transitional program and the Leninist strategy for building the revolutionary party.

17. The method of the transitional program -- which consists in raising the level of consciousness of the masses through their own experiences -- tends to be replaced by the method of exemplary actions, actions taken by revolutionists outside the mass movement. The masses, reduced to the role of spectators, are supposedly "educated" by these examples and "stimulated" into action.

We reject this "spectacular action" theory of winning the leadership of the class. It tends to substitute the techniques of minority "initiatives" -- especially the need for "minority violence" -- for a program to confront and replace the reformist leadership of the class. It tends to substitute technical, organizational "tactics" for political program, reducing the program for socialist revolution to one of military leadership by a small minority acting on behalf of the working class.

Insofar as Latin America is concerned, this tendency is very clear in the "strategy of armed struggle" and armed propaganda. The method of the last world congress tends to reduce the Marxist program to the need for armed struggle to which everything else in the program is subordinated.

As the example of Chile has once more tragically demonstrated, the key problem is not that the working masses lack the desire or ability to take up arms. But until a mass revolutionary Marxist party is capable of politically destroying the reformist leadership and replacing it, the revolutionary will and combativity of the masses will time and again be betrayed.

As a minority of the delegates at the world congress feared, the errors underlying the Latin American orientation were not limited to Latin America. The theories on "minority violence" in Europe prove this. But the consequences of abandoning the method



of the transitional program are not simply limited to this. The IEC majority's concept of national campaigns corresponding to the concerns of the vanguard results in an inability to build and lead mass movements based on the objective needs of the masses.

18. The IEC majority now openly asserts a theory of building the revolutionary party in two stages: first winning leadership over the "vanguard" by orienting to its concerns; then the masses.

It is clear by virtue of the very nature of our organizations and their type of activity that before winning the leadership of the class as a whole we will first win the vanguard to our ranks, or a sector of it. But this vanguard must be won by proving that we have the best program, the best strategy, and the best tactics for winning the leadership of the masses and for leading struggles to victory. That is how we will build the party. The best elements of the vanguard must be won by systematically educating them in our program which is oriented to the masses. The fact that the IEC majority sees our program for winning the "vanguard of a mass character" as separate from a program for the masses, gives rise to a very clear tendency of the following type: "through tactical initiatives in the vanguard (exemplary actions, minority violence, campaigns around the concerns of the vanguard) let's first build organizations of the size of the ex-Ligue Communiste; we'll take up the strategy for winning over the masses later on." In doing this, we arrive at an incorrect concept of the relationship between our organization and other politically advanced elements, and of the relationship between our organization and the masses. We thus arrive at two politically distinct steps in building the revolutionary

party. The danger in doing this lies in the fact that we cut ourselves off from possibilities of leading the working masses, leaving their day-to-day struggles in the hands of the reformist and centrist forces, and run the risk of remaining forever in the "first stage."

19. The line of the IEC majority is a line of adaptation to the political moods of the "vanguard of a mass character." The clearest signs of this are the ultraleft errors we've been making for a long time: guerrilla warfare in Latin America, the errors in Irish work, Vietnam work, minority violence, etc.

The June 21 demonstration called by the ex-Ligue Communiste proves this completely. As Comrade Hansen explains in his document "The Underlying Differences in Method," we are in complete agreement that it was correct to organize an action in response to the fascist-racist offensive. However, the character of the June 21 demonstration was determined not by the objective of mobilizing the working class and its organizations to answer the fascist offensive, but, as the "22 Theses" adopted by the Third Congress of the Ligue Communiste explicitly states, the antifascist policy of the Ligue was based on the concept of "minority violence," on the supposed need to reintroduce violence in the class struggle.

The adaptation to the political moods and concerns of the "new mass vanguard" is not limited to ultraleftism alone, however. There is an opportunist side of this adaptation also. In this sense the Ligue Communiste's opportunist error of calling for a vote for the Union of the Left (including the Left Radicals) complements the other series of errors perfectly. In making an ultraleft error of seeing the question of "armed struggle" (i.e., for or against the peaceful road to socialism) as

the dividing line between revolutionists and non-revolutionists in the 1973 legislative elections, they missed the real class dividing line. Differentiation of ourselves from all those forces engaged in a class-collaborationist maneuver and therefore a refusal to vote for the Union of the Left should have been the basis of our intervention in the elections.

20. To our criticisms. supporters of the IEC majority have retorted: "Where is your alternative?" We have no intention of presenting an alternative on the same level as the European document. We do not intend to write a document with a dogmatic prognosis for all Europe, a document that makes an abstraction of all the differences between the various countries and fails to situate capitalist Europe in its world context. Nor will we write a document prescribing a series of tactics for all the European sections.

We do, of course, believe that it is possible to analyze the broad outlines of the economic, social and political situation, and that it is possible to derive some general conclusions from such an analysis. Within this context the comrades of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction will contribute to the European discussion on the international level and by analyzing the situation in their countries. If at present this is done only in a

partial way, it is because the discussion on Europe throughout the ranks of the International, including its European sections, began only a few months ago, and on the basis of a document that has only obscured the problems and perspectives facing European Trotskyists. Out of the fruitful discussion and collective elaboration now under way, a document presenting the general lines of a correct analysis and orientation will emerge. This is a process we intend to contribute to both internation-



ally and on the level of our national sections.

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