

POLITICAL BUREAU MINUTES.....24 October 1967

Present: Full: Turner, Nelson, Robertson, Stoute, Henry
Alts: Glenn, Small Staff: Martin, Gordon
Absent: Alt: Janacek(exc.)

Meeting convened 8:40 p.m.

- Agenda:
1. Minutes
 2. General Information and Correspondence
 3. Personnel: Press and Organization
 4. Anti-war and CIPA
 5. SWP 1968 Electoral Slate

1. Minutes: Minutes of 21 Aug. have been distributed. Minutes of 11 and 25 Sept. and 2 and 8 Oct. are in draft form only, although many of the appendices to these minutes have been stenciled.

Disc: Glenn, Robertson, Nelson

Motion: To accept the minutes of 21 August 1967.

Passed

2. General Information and Correspondence:

- a. Luce Book: Phillip A. Luce, celebrated Pler turned red-baiter, has produced a new book, "Road to Revolution--Communist Guerilla Warfare in the U.S.A." Its main targets are PL and Black Nationalists, but p.129 makes lengthy reference of J. Glenn, Spartacist leader and author of a leaflet which presumably triggered the Chicago 1964 riots in which, it is reported, 46 Spartacist members were arrested.[!]
- b. Guevara: The elimination of Guevara has implications for the Fidelist-Guevarist thesis of political struggle recently expounded by Debray. Guevarist line is essentially updating of pre-Marxian radical theory exemplified by Auguste Blanqui, with important difference of the present non-urban setting and entirely different political context. Guevarist line is based on the assumptions that working class cannot make a revolution, Marx and Lenin are obsolete, even the Maoist model of a CP on top leading peasant army will not work in Latin America, while the Trotskyist concept of working class defending itself and struggling is seen as simply a provocation. Even peasantry is not to be trusted but rather to be used; the form of the struggle is the foco--rootless, petty-bourgeois heroes will be the leaders, using the peasantry, and engage directly in armed guerilla struggle with the forces of the state. Except in situation of a defeated working class and already crumbling state, this concept of struggle results only in the slaughter of the isolated cadres, and, to the extent that the earlier stages of the struggle are successful, the roots of any sort of mass movement, even of the radical peasantry, are destroyed. Moreover, the successful outcome of this form of guerilla struggle is at best the creation of a Bonapartist-led, nationalist deformed workers state. Intervention of the Guevarists into this struggle is as a manipulated extension of Cuban foreign policy, with the admitted aim of taking the pressure off Cuba. Yet the passing of Guevara is regrettable, as he strived, within the limits of his own conceptions, to be a genuine revolutionary.
- c. Bolivian prisoners: Newsletter of 21 Oct. contains report, translated from La Verite (theoretical organ of O.C.I.), from Bolivian Trotskyists in exile in Argentina. Several dozen po-

litical prisoners, evidently from the mass movement, have been sent into prison camps in the Bolivian jungles, denied clothing and protection, and are slowly dying of disease, malnutrition, exposure. Unlike the Debray case, there has been no general outcry and protest.

- d. Zeluck: New York Times of 23 Oct. gave him coverage for calling in teachers' union convention for a general strike against the NY Taylor law.
- e. SWP: Pre-convention discussion is interesting to us for several developments. Comrades are referred to our new Preface to M.B. #4, which we will distribute separately at the Convention.
 - (1) Negro Question: Several of the stupider members of the Majority have made various proposals in an attempt to deal with SWP's increasing loss of its black members. Some, referring to the 1963 Majority resolution, show how it implies the concept of dual black/white vanguardism--which was indignantly denied in 1963, when we pointed out these implications--and various proposals are made involving the actual setting up of a separate black vanguard party. (ii) Anti-war: A 20-page, carefully reasoned document has been submitted by David Fender, raising a number of good points: to wit--the SWP sees a contradiction between struggling for withdrawal of troops and holding together a movement of Stalinists, liberals, etc. and subordinates the former task to the latter; this is the first step on the road to capitulation to the liberal bourgeoisie; proper counter approach would be along the lines of a united front; how did such a petty-bourgeois current develop in the SWP? Reply by Kerry makes constant reference to the stupidity of Healyite tactics, which poses possibility that Fender may be in contact with Healy, although this is not Healy's line on the anti-war movement. Our preface to M.B. #4 makes use of the Fender document. Disc: Gordon, Turner, Robertson
- f. Chinese "New Left": Extracts from NY Times story of 9 Oct.: "Group Opposing Both Mao and His Foes Said to Worry Peking"

A shadowy "new left" movement in Communist China that condemns both the Cultural Revolution of Chairman Mao Tse-tung and the "revisionists" that the Maoists seek to purge is reported to be causing concern in Peking.

...The sense of the Changsha, Huhehot and Shanghai press allusions to the "new left" is that it is made up of people who feel that the Cultural Revolution has become mainly a power struggle between party factions that represent vested interests.

...The "new left" apparently seeks to overthrow all old "power-holders," to redistribute offices and wealth and undertake genuine socialization.

3. Personnel: Press and Organization:

- a. Army: One of our friends has asked our opinion on the legal proprieties of setting up SDS chapters in the Army. It would probably be advisable for radicals in the Army to keep clear of organizing branches of such national groups and seek to form instead some kind of Ad Hoc Committee on the issues they are

interested in--anti-war, soldiers rights, etc.

b. Chicago: Local situation in Chicago has evidently come unstuck again, is functioning erratically and with much internal tension; close contacts are becoming estranged. Disc: Glenn

c. N.O. Staff:

Motion: To put Comrade Martin formally back on staff and grant her the right to attend PB meetings with voice and consultative vote.

Passed

d. CC Plenum: On the basis of informal polling by telephone of CC members, the best time for Plenum would seem to be Sat.-Sun. of New Year's rather than Xmas, possibly in Austin. Disc: Nelson

e. PB Functioning:

Motion: That the preparation of a national report to the NYC local meetings should be presented each meeting by a different full member of the PB, rotating alphabetically.

Passed

f. NYC Student Fraction: First meeting of fraction was held 14 Oct. by 3 comrades attending school at Columbia U., 2 comrades and a sympathizer at City College, our NYC organizer, at-large at the New School, a sympathizer attending High School near NYC, and an N.O. representative. Covered were aims, structure and functioning of Spartacist campus work. Our main aim will be propagandistic rather than interventionist in student politics, with the perspective of recruiting to the Spartacist League. We seek to charter campus clubs at CCNY and Columbia to permit the use of campus facilities for lit tables, public meetings, etc. Fraction meetings will be partly on organizational points but will include at each meeting one relevant political question of interest to students, so that contacts can be invited to these meetings in the absence of high-level campus activity or frequent NYC public meetings. Our perspective for the very long run might be to set up a city-wide campus Spartacist club, a de facto NYC youth section. The fraction also established a steering committee of one each from CCNY and Columbia, together with the District organizer. Disc: Turner, Nelson

g. N.O.: The National Office staff has been and continues to be heavily burdened with 7 major special tasks aside from the production of SPARTACIST #11 and routine work: 1) production of 21 October leaflet; 2) projected interim mailing of 3-5 items (21 Oct. leaflet, latest Spartacist West Vol. II #2, "Anti-War Sellout" leaflet, projected circular listing material presently in print plus foreign publications, projected "Open Letter to J.P. Cannon") to Spartacist subscribers, selected general mailing list and particularly to approximately 1100 names of SWP-YSA subscribers; 3) preface and production of Marxist Bulletin #4 Parts I and II (110 pages); 4) back PB minutes; 5) S.o.L. promotion; 6) distribution and sale to SWP Convention; 7) Der Klassenkampf #4. Disc: Turner, Robertson

h. Additional forces for staff and paper: Recent letter from Steve S. (appended) was read to PB. It reflects problem of present hang-up of production of SPARTACIST #11 and regularization of future issues, solution to which we have been considering intensively at our recent meetings and tonight. (See also appended letter from Robertson to White which was read in draft form to meeting as part of the discussion.) If we can solve our editorial problems (along the lines suggested in Robertson's letter) then we should think seriously in terms of a monthly pa-

per, although financing will be a difficulty. In the interim, we can pay for the next issue of the paper by a short-term personal loan from a comrade. But some additional personnel for the N.O. must be secured.

Disc: Turner, Gordon, Nelson, Henry, Stoute, Small, Glenn, Robertson, Turner, Nelson, Glenn, Robertson, Stoute, Gordon

Motion: To table to the next meeting the question of getting immediate fill-in help for the N.O. and/or paper. Passed

Motion: That we seek (in connection with and prior to the CC Plenum) a second full-time functionary--i.e. with the end result of a full-time editor and a full-time N.O. functionary--and that we drive hard to raise the frequency of the paper to monthly. Tabled to next meeting

4. Anti-war and CIPA: A proposal is being considered by Stanley Aronowitz (W. Side CIPA) and/or the 5th Ave. Peace Parade Committee, to facilitate the entry of CIPA and possibly other groups into the Committee. Aronowitz is reportedly planning to set up an anti-imperialist caucus inside the Committee around the demand for immediate withdrawal of troops. Aronowitz maintains that CIPA would not enter the Committee unless other left groups, notably the SL, are also admitted (PL has continued as a minimal member all along). In principle, we would enter covertly or as individuals, if necessary, any group, no matter how reformist, in order to fight, but not to provide a left cover for a reformist program.

We should encourage Aronowitz to proceed with setting up a meeting of the proposed anti-imperialist caucus, and should fight for the adoption of the following conditions as the minimum basis for our participation: A. Re the caucus: it must base itself on 1) programmatically, the demand for immediate unconditional withdrawal, as an anti-imperialist demand, 2) tactically, the aim of polarizing the Committee itself, e.g. by the perspective of seeking to involve masses of working people in anti-war struggles in terms related to their own struggles--trade union demands and strikes, ghetto demonstrations, soldiers' rights, etc., 3) method of caucus functioning, through unanimity in the caucus, i.e. the right of any participating group to disagree and not be bound by the decision of the rest, with no private information held or secret deals made by any of the caucus' "leaders". B. Re the Committee itself: It would have to become a bona-fide united front (thereby necessarily breaking with or driving out such elements as SANE, Reform Democrats, etc., who are basically on the imperialist side in the war), i.e. 1) participants identified by organization, not masqueraded as a collection of individuals, 2) no "umbrella" slogans, but rather the responsibility of the different political groups to raise their own slogans, and the Committee to schedule and coordinate activities, etc., 3) no restrictions on any group's right to raise its own propaganda.

If the projected caucus is won to agree with us, then with the loose, open character of the Parade Committee, we would be able to raise a fight for these demands while remaining only potential Committee members. I.e. we would not have to take responsibility

for and give a left cover to the present indefensible character of the Committee as a condition for trying to change it.

Motion: To authorize our CIPA fraction to proceed on this basis.

Passed

Motion: To table the last point of agenda to next meeting.

Passed

Meeting adjourned 11:15 p.m.

Attachment, PB Minutes of 24 October 1967

8 October 1967
Chicago

TO THE POLITICAL BUREAU:

Dear Comrades,

The Political Bureau and the entire S.L. membership cannot afford to ignore the extreme implications of the shocking irregularity of the Spartacist publication. Number eleven is already over three months late, and if we shall have succeeded in establishing a precedent this would give us a semi-annual publications schedule--more than enough to liquidate any organization, even one with the best politics.

It is important to fully recognize the havoc this crisis is causing in our attempts at party building. In isolated areas where we are organizationally weak, and more reliant on a regular publication, our cadres are becoming increasingly isolated and demoralized. These are often areas where we have a monopoly and should make big gains. On the other hand, our unique contributions to American politics, without which centrism cannot be defeated, are almost totally out of the picture so long as our publication does not appear. Issues where we should be making major inroads against the centrists, such as the Middle East question, are fading into the background. But the most serious consequence of the crisis is that it has raised doubts in the minds of militants as to the viability of the S.L., and our seriousness about the American revolution. Young socialists who are close to us politically are joining the Workers League or sticking with the centrists as we appear to provide the least stable alternative.

Moreover, the crisis appears to be taking place when there are no organizational excuses at all. If our resources are too limited for a bi-monthly, then we should be publishing a quarterly, or whatever our resources can handle. It is only under the conditions of an extreme organizational crisis, with our resources cut off, that the present publications irregularities should occur. In which event, we should make special appeals, borrow money, pull back to a tri-monthly--but in any case, adjust organizationally, and carry on the publication.

In the absence of such a crisis we should recognize in the non-appearance of the Spartacist a clear political action (or inaction) on the part of the present S.L. leadership. It is not enough to understand the crisis of the present era, it is necessary to build an apparatus capable of resolving that crisis. All of the issues facing us today, including that of the need for a regular S.L. publication, are necessarily dependent on the necessity to build the Marxist party capable of leading the working class to power in this country. The publications crisis indicates a political weakness on the party question, since the American revolution can never be accomplished by a leadership which does not have the discipline to carry out the methodical, progressive steps necessary to the building of the revolutionary party. That is why the irregularities of the Spartacist publication place in question the ability of the present S.L. leadership to build a revolutionary party in this country--not to speak of the rebuilding of the Fourth International.

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It is essentially because of the political character of the present crisis that I am in favor of the most extreme measures being taken to ensure that the present breakdown in the S.L. publication never recurs. In the first place, the S.L. leadership should feel obliged to give a thorough explanation to the membership of the reasons for the present breakdown. This policy should be applied to all future cases in which the Spartacist does not appear on schedule. In addition, if the eleventh issue is not out in a few weeks (late October), I am for convening an emergency national conference to determine what is wrong with the Spartacist League that we can not get out a regular publication; and what measures must be taken to ensure that these irregularities will never appear again.

Leninist greetings,

Steve Schultz
Chicago

Attachment, PB Minutes of 24 October 1967

New York City
16 October 1967

Geoffrey White
Berkeley, California

Dear Geoff,

A lot has piled up that I want to talk to you about. So I'm writing on one point now and very much looking forward to discussing with you in person within some five or six weeks during my tour of our locals on the West Coast. In fact, much of what I touch on now is in way of being mainly a preliminary presentation for talking over with you and other comrades when I'm on the road and later in modified form at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee.

Problems centering on our press are raising nagging and sharp organizational problems. By problems I mean mainly, but not exclusively, the frequency of Spartacist. Our opponents have caught this and both the Wohlforthites and SWP'ers, including Paul Boutelle in person in New Orleans, have asserted that the main criticism of the Spartacist League is the infrequency of its central organ! (Such gall was only matched by that true friend of the Left, the N. Y. Times, which back in 1957 cautioned A. J. Muste that the good name of American radicalism was threatened by his projected discussion group in common with the U. S. Stalinists.)

However, there are real questions involved, too. Without a regular, frequent central organ we lose in many ways: in tying the League together, in prestige, and internationally; much impact is lost entirely in drawing people toward us because we then never widely or fully exploit our often very fine, high level activity in struggle and the rather frequent brilliant vindication and striking aptness of our ideas and the reciprocal miserable showing and experiences of all sorts of opponents and competitors.

Actually, compared to opponents of roughly comparable size, e. g., the Draper (110 people?) and Wohlforth (40?) groups, we generate a much larger effective volume of printed material, i. e., defined as: (different materials) x (number of copies) x (specificity of audience). For example, at the Chicago New Politics Conference, we had for general distribution 1000 copies each of Spartacist West, featuring an article on King, the I. S. C. and the C. N. P., together with 1000 copies of Jack Glenn's lengthy document written for West Side C. I. P. A. and with essentially our line. For the NYC teacher's strike, we covered a key mass meeting distributing 4000 copies of a special, full and very good leaflet directed especially to one key issue of the wide-spread minority hostility to the strike. (At that particular rally the Wohlforthites sold perhaps a dozen copies of their paper.) For the coming 21 October,

Washington D. C. demonstration we plan to distribute some 7000 copies of a major, two-color offset leaflet. The volume of material turned out by Espartaco and Der Klassen Kampf (Spartakist) is such that if we wanted to half fake it we could put out a Spartacist exclusively of English translations! Compared to the above, the output of Wohlforth is largely illusory -- empty and intended as a Potemkin Village for internal soothing and Healy's consumption -- and that of the Draper group is virtually nil. So why, then, are we hung-up with our main publication and what can we do about it? I believe the problem is essentially editorial; in particular, in the multitude of roles thrust on me. To be sure, we frequently have sharp financial difficulties, but we also have a responsive membership and friends. To be sure, our volunteer editorial and national staff has effectively just been cut perhaps in half: one back to work, Liz back to school, Lynne out of town, Helen back on longer winter hours at work, Al completely absorbed in his demanding job and SSEU work. To be sure, would-be writers of promised major pieces, as often as not, let us down. (This list is long and embarrassing in the number of full CC members it contains!)

The most concrete reason we have no Spartacist No. 11 at hand is because Nos. 6 - 10 got out (more-or-less on time) in good part through my playing an editorial role which ran me ragged and ran the organization into something of a hole. I'm much more an organizational politician than an editor. While I think I can check material for errors, inconsistencies, and short-sighted departures with the keenness of a 17th Century Calvinist, it is unnatural and clumsy for me to do the re-writing. (Yet I submit that the Spartacist issues to date read very well, even years after publication, so that we find ourselves endlessly reprinting and circulating them. Few others can say the same!)

Moreover, vital needs of our organization have been set aside because of my role in getting the paper out frequently in the past year (five full issues in 11 months): the PB has met too infrequently because of the time needed to be put in by me for its preparation and, subsequently, for working over and mailing minutes; our N. O. exploits and guides, all too inadequately, the many activities, legal cases, etc., we get into or are thrust into; we've made too little, or no, follow-up on correspondence, contacts; too little, or too late, by way of systematic attention and follow-up regarding local situations -- including tours, etc.; our international work slides with brilliant opportunities let slip. It is now only at enormous cost that any kind of internal differences could be thrashed out so that the exercise of the right of factional struggle would mean the absorption of the available time of the National Office with all else at a virtual standstill. We produce very little new non-periodical literature, Marxist Bulletins and pamphlets, though many are projected and fitfully worked on for years. In short, all of the activities which built us and recruited and trained our present cadre are let slide. This must stop.

We vitaly and urgently need two qualified full-time functionaries: a national chairman and an editor. (Actually, we could well use a third and fourth full-time comrade too, i. e., national secretary and NYC organizer, but they are not vital as full-time posts and are utterly beyond our present means.)

I am reminded of what we heard from an informant at the founding conference of the national Draperite organization, the I. S. C.'s of America, that Draper observed that it takes about the same rather substantive national staff to service an organization of a hundred as it does to service a thousand -- and we are 80 with all the same needs and demands. Most recently, Steve S. of Chicago wrote in demanding to know where Spartacist No. 11 was, that press irregularity showed a lack of seriousness in building a revolutionary party, and insisted that if the paper wasn't out in a few weeks then an emergency national conference be convened, presumably to throw the rascals out. More serious than his somewhat fetishistic approach, ignoring the S. L.'s overall output, literary and otherwise, was Steve's lack of a concrete alternative... i. e., replace them with whom?... Wohlforth? (I. e., if you can't get enough good French wine... drink lots of hydrochloric acid?) This Spring comrades were up in arms demanding to know, and properly, where several months of PB minutes were. It took a crash program (i. e., much else sacrificed) to get them almost all out. Situations like this are the concrete embodiment of the phrase "we are not yet even a stable propaganda group." At any moment some vital need is uncovered -- until such time as it becomes a desperate issue, then an other equally vital (but sometimes less glaring or obvious) function is starved for a time. Most lately we've concentrated on getting out Marxist Bulletins, so that all previously published ones are back in print and No. 7 and No. 4 I & II are newly done. I personally have been compelled to spend some time on international correspondence and legal defense. Of particular priority has been our military rights consultation, a growing concern.

We've slowly been overloading the money side as an ad hoc solution for other matters (i. e., we began with an entirely commercially produced paper -- now running \$550 plus \$150 mailing per issue. Then we took on a \$95-a-month office and just now we are laying out \$40 a week for functionary expense) and I propose that we lean harder there until our limits are reached. Examination shows that the possibility of replacing me in my overall role in the National Office is presently much more difficult than that of working editor of the paper. It is this consideration, rather than my parallel personal preferences which leads me to believe that we should seek a full-time editor, hopefully to pay him some trivial weekly sum.

There is no available comrade on the East Coast who possesses the pre-requisites at this time for the job. Among the indicated qualities needed are capacity to facilely re-work deficient copy so that it reads both interestingly

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and correctly (this Summer's production of Spartacist No. 11 faltered over just this point): ability to meet schedules by filling in with substitute material, in good part doubtless written by the editor, when alleged authors default; some imagination and initiative in projecting articles and issues; ability to coax and correct the work of prickly or reluctant writers; and a subtle command of our political positions, or at least an awareness of one's own (temporary) deficiencies.

A tall order. But we have a good and willing editorial staff and a politically competent P. B. to assist. On running our membership through my mental IBM machine, the name of Dave C., now in Iowa, comes up as a comrade who might have the makings of a fine revolutionary editor.

On my way to the Coast I hope to stop over in the Midwest, particularly to talk with Comrade C. whom none of us in the National Office have ever met. The particular outcome that I have in mind as an optional one is for our putative editor to obtain support through a few lucrative hours weekly of teaching nights (we have the connections in NYC to secure this), while I execute a ploy recommended by our welfare workers fraction. Taken together, these measures could sharply reduce our personal expense bill, while giving us the necessary two full-timers. The money saved, plus the money coaxed in by the stabilized press and strengthened N. O., could in turn be used to up the frequency of our press.

We shall see. In any case, these are some of the internal concerns uppermost in my mind as the time draws near for my overdue trip to the West Coast.

Comradely,

Jim Robertson

P.S. On looking over the above, it appears of sufficient general interest to warrant mimeographing as an attachment to the PB minutes. - J.