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EXCHANGES ON ITALY

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NOTE CONCERNING TRANSLATIONS

While the translations contained in this bulletin are accurate to the best of our knowledge, given our inadequate capacity in translating Italian into English, the style and tone of the translations may not correspond precisely to the original and comrades should be correspondingly cautious about drawing conclusions based on these considerations.

--John Sharpe,
for the I.S.

[translation]

THESES ON THE CRISIS OF THE FOURTH
INTERNATIONAL AND THE TASKS OF
BOLSHEVIK-LENINISTS [excerpts]

...

Point 9. The forces which lay claim to the Fourth International may be subdivided schematically as follows:

a) a right, which has definitively gone over into the camp of counterrevolution. This is represented by the LSSP of Ceylon and by Posadas' organizations. After 1968 (approval of the USSR intervention into Czechoslovakia), the latter went over to Stalinist positions,

b) a center, represented by the overwhelming majority of the forces of the Trotskyist movement. What characterizes them is opportunist deviations of a centrist type. These deviations are expressed: in the United Secretariat's capitulation to the petty bourgeoisie (pro-Stalinism and pro-centrism of the majority; pacifism, studentism, feminism of the minority; pro-nationalism of both); in the [OCI-led] Organizing Committee's capitulation to social democracy; in the national Trotskyism and "philosophical" idealism of Healy's International Committee; in Lutte Ouvrière's economism; in the LIRQI's zig-zags between opportunism and adventurism and in various deviations of tens of other groups and organizations,

c) a left, extremely in a minority, which, despite errors, has remained on the terrain of orthodox Trotskyism. To our knowledge, this is represented essentially by the international Spartacist tendency. This also includes, in addition of course to our group, the small Trotskyist Organizing Committee in the USA. It is possible that other groups exist, whose positions we do not currently know, which stand on the terrain of orthodox Trotskyism. In the near future the GBL will seek to verify this possibility.

...

Point 11. On the basis of these theses, the GBL intends to open the broadest possible debate: in the first place with the forces of orthodox Trotskyism with the goal of reaching an organic unity with them if possible; in the second place with all organizations of the [Fourth] International willing to confront our positions.

[Adopted by the Bolshevik-Leninist Group (GBL) of Italy, January 1976]

[translation]

FIRST BALANCE SHEET OF THE DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE INTERNATIONAL SPARTACIST TENDENCY AND THE BOLSHEVIK-LENINIST GROUP FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL [excerpt]

Conclusions

The discussion between the iSt and the GBL(I) [Gruppo Bolscevico-Leninista (d'Italia)--Bolshevik-Leninist Group (of Italy)] for the Fourth International has been going on for over a year, a time which, if insufficient for a detailed evaluation of all questions (given the material limits of our organization) is certainly sufficient to make possible a general balance sheet of the respective positions.

Our disagreement about the problems referred to above [i.e., voting for workers parties in popular fronts and the national question--ed.] is not motivated by empirical and contingent considerations, but derives from our desire to completely assimilate and totally apply not only the general line of Trotskyist struggle, but all the methodological resources and tactical gains developed by Bolshevism-Leninism.

We reassert our agreement with the goals and general bases of the iSt's political activity. At the same time, we do not hide the fact that in our judgement, with respect to its historical gains, which justify characterizing it as "orthodox faction of the FI," there remain serious dangers of degeneration, in the sense of its transformation into an ultra-left sect sui generis. However, we consider that such a danger is far from being on the verge of being concretized.

As follows from the context of our criticism, for us the most negative element is the increasing tendency toward "sectarian" positions and the consequent increase of relative errors--while it is quite conceivable that in a very small and isolated Bolshevik-Leninist formation tendencies of this type might arise, the revolutionary vitality and validity of such organizations is equivalent to its capacity to overcome them progressively, both in theoretical understanding as well as in propagandistic and agitational practice and in the organizational "style of work."

However, above and beyond the seriousness of the disagreements, they do not constitute an overall disagreement in principle, such as would prevent, in our opinion, political cohabitation and confrontation within a single organization. As we have already pointed out, we reassert our agreement with the "Declaration of Principles of the SL/U.S."

Your tendency has already advanced toward the formation of an "International Trotskyist League" (ITL): our proposal is that the discussion between us continue for this period and that we participate, on the basis of democratic centralism, in the formation of such an organization.

We consider it obvious that, given the fundamental points of agreement (also concerning almost all the questions which have been considered and debated between the iSt and the GBL) with the RWP/Sri Lanka, the relations between the GBL and the iSt cannot be separated from those between the iSt and the RWP (concerning which we would like to see later documents).

Naturally it would be absurd for us to deny that our goal is that of contributing to the development of the iSt/ITL, as well as waging a factional struggle against the positions that we consider seriously erroneous, but our future participation would not present any analogy, however remote, to a maneuver or an "entrism" operation, that is, on the basis of the same general evaluation which we have given of the iSt. It goes without saying that we are fully prepared to subordinate ourselves to the rules of democratic centralism, henceforth to put into practice the decisions and to defend publicly the political positions which will be taken by the majority of the organizations.

--Executive Committee of the
Bolshevik-Leninist Group
for the Fourth International

Genova, 22 August 1976

[translation]

FOSCO TO I.S.

[Belluno
14 April 1976]

iSt
New York

Dear Comrades,

I am replying to your letters of the 5th and 6th of April, whose meaning cannot be limited to the question of the cover. Schematically, I think it is possible to note the following:

a) The timely discussion with comrade Sharpe on the press (we realized the need of having a paper after the meeting with Il Militante) has been completely insufficient.

b) The meeting of the interim IS did not realize this, although I think that by the beginning of March it was important to evaluate the situation of the European groups.

c) The press episode (that is, concerning the fundamental political initiative of the Nucleus) is only one moment of the general tension ("scollamento"--"coming unstuck") between the Nucleus and the iSt the manifestations of which are easily documented.

-The non-existence of the European representative of the iSt in regard to the Nucleus,

-significant organizational "dysfunctions" both in relations with London Station and with the LTF (from which I still haven't received any reply to my last letter),

-no real iSt guidance or participation in confronting the Italian situation (apart from the electoral policy on the 15 June [1975] and the correct criticism of abstractness in my articles).

Under these conditions, the offer of editorial autonomy might be confused with the obvious practical consequence of the minimal attention given the Italian situation.

Since I believe that Kissinger was not completely dreaming when, during the meeting of U.S. ambassadors in Europe, 13-14 December 1975, he singled out "Italy, Spain, Portugal and perhaps France" as the axis of the greatest class tensions, I consider that--in terms of political perspectives--the problem cannot be avoided, not even for an organization as small as the iSt.

If you think that the decisive area of the class confrontation is that of the Germanic-Anglo-Saxon area, and that the Italo-Iberian area has a secondary role, and that in some way it is preferable to establish a base in England-Germany rather than implant resources and men in areas which anyway one considers not to have a decisive role, you have to say that clearly.

The correct objectives of the socialist revolution programmatically based on the Transitional Program and led by the reborn 4th International cannot be abstracted from a discussion of political per-

spectives, from concretely coming to terms with the geography of the class struggle.

I think that in good part the uneasiness of the iSt sections, which sometimes finds picturesque expressions, has in the last instance a political origin, namely, indefiniteness of political perspectives hidden behind a varnish of organization-ism.

The May meeting and particularly the summer camp cannot avoid these problems.

I state in advance that my knowledge of the internal discussion of the iSt is limited: I refer to my particular experience and to the few things I have read.

* * * * *

As you know, the Italian political crisis suddenly accelerated recently. In less than two months, taking Sharpe's last visit as a point of reference, the manifestation of the crisis has quickly increased:

a) The stormy congress of the Christian Democrats (DC), which ended by splitting the organization in half.

-The failure of the center-left government formula is reflected in the disintegration of the Dorotea grouping, hegemonic inside the party until then (see also the subsequent regional Veneto congress of the DC).

-The failure of the project of "refounding the DC," as evidenced, in addition to the Piccoli amendment worsening the draft abortion bill, by the openly anti-popular character of the economic measures and by the paralysis of the political prospects expressed both in regard to the La Malfa initiative and by the answer to the PCI proposal of "accordo di fine legislatura" [agreement to continue Parliament until the scheduled elections of 1977].

-It is a clear expression of a project of a Chilean type (the PCI in the government, the DC in opposition) in the conservative sectors of the DC (Fanfani).

b) Devaluation of the lira and galloping inflation: the exchange of the dollar passed from 756 lira (when Sharpe was in Italy) to the present 898.

c) The contracts for the main sectors of industrial workers are still under discussion, even though it should also be noted that up to now the PCI has shown considerable ability in controlling and holding back the working masses.

d) The explosion ["mina vagante"] of abortion. The government crisis and the subsequent early elections (13-20 June), conjuncturally caused by the abortion question and not the economic measures.

What are the political conclusions? I'll try to mention some of them:

1) The absence of a bourgeois alternative to the DC, a big crisis in the smaller bourgeois parties which distinguished themselves in the past by heated anti-communism and the strength inside them of left groupings (Saragat of the PSDI, Zanone of PLI).

2) The momentary unanimity, not within the PCI and the PSI, but instead around their respective political perspectives (historical compromise and left alternative).

3) I also think that at the present time there is no real basis for the hypothesis which projects a preventative counterrevolution in Italy under the most varied terms: "fascistization," "coup," etc. These hypotheses are now included in the political framework which tends to bloc around the PCI. It is true that the "tension strategy" ["strategia della tensione"] has constantly tried to prepare fertile grounds for these hypotheses, but up to now it has resulted more in discrediting the bourgeoisie than damaging the proletariat.

For me, the alternative between Popular Front and Bonapartism as it is posed by the comrades of Il Militante (No. of Dec.-Jan. 1976, pp. 16-17) is also to be rejected. We should not forget that in the same article the comrades defined as a "workers government" a PCI-PSI-Trade-Union government which breaks with the bourgeois parties and interests. In such an analysis not only is there a clear overestimation of the Moro-La Malfa government, but above all they forget that bonapartism implies strong impulses for re-organization within the bourgeois camp, which at present have not surfaced in Italy.

4) Although entering a stage of rapid unfolding political change, the crisis is slackening--because it does not exist on top of an international crisis (as in the case of a war) and because of the absence of a revolutionary party. On the other hand, U.S. intervention cannot but take into consideration the heightened degree of mass mobilization.

5) The specific characteristics of the Popular Front (political and social forces involved, reformist room for maneuver) must be studied.

* * * * *

The task of systematizing these elements means facing the first real obstacle which is a barrier to the Nucleus, to the press, to everything.

How to Build a Political Leadership of the Nucleus?

The reply should naturally be put in the framework of the organization's international perspective, but if all of us agree that Italy is an important country, that Kissinger is not dreaming with his eyes open, that the Italian political crisis is already now passing through decisive moments, we cannot not pose seriously and fundamentally the problem of the political leadership of the Nucleus.

It is possible that the interim IS of the iSt has discussed that,

but having not seen any political resolution concerning this question, I am obliged to hold to the merely organizational indications contained in Sharpe's letters. From these letters it is possible to infer that the IS considers that in September when the Nucleus will include at best 5 elements (Federico and friend, Bart, Giulio, and myself), it will then have its leadership.

Now the work and the difficulties encountered in this aborted issue of "Trotskyist Program" make me clearly conscious of the contrary. Not only is it not possible to publish the press without a political leadership, but to have a political leadership an adequate investment of capacities and resources is required. What is projected for September is no doubt a reinforcement, but in no case can it be defined as a political leadership that is up to the work of laying political bases and taking initiative toward other small groups, work required by the particular degree of acuteness the class confrontation has taken on in Italy today.

Not to take account of this reality means deciding to give up a timely commitment to the Italian situation, relegating the Nucleus to the stunted life of a simple facade, in a word to "miss the train" (taking the image of comrade Sharpe's constant fear while in Italy).

It seems to me that the solution to the question of political leadership for the Nucleus is to be found in two directions:

1) To guarantee the presence in Italy of a capable comrade who has the full political confidence of the IS. A presence of the kind that was realized in Sweden, as an example.

2) The adoption of a more active policy (exchange of information, agreements), toward some groups with which we have contact (Il Militante first of all and Il Soviet to be evaluated).

In the immediate future I think it is opportune to postpone the decision of having an Italian press (this is de facto also the opinion of the iSt, which foresees "peut-être" an issue between now and September) and withdraw to a possible pamphlet for the elections, including:

1) A long article on the Italian situation which re-elaborates my basic article and the considerations on the period after the June 15 elections and our electoral policy.

2) The translation of the last part of the article in WV #74 on the 15 June elections.

3) Translating pp. 259-277 from Trotsky's 1939-40 Writings (Federico) and a short introduction by Sharpe (or another IS comrade) on electoral tactics in general and the U.S. presidential elections of 1940 in particular.

This outlook on the Nucleus' problems and more generally on the problems of the iSt will be the fundamental axis of an intervention of the Italian comrade (Giulio in the case of an active agreement, and

me directly) at the European May meeting.

In the event of contributions, disagreements and other interventions on this subject, "the Italian situation and the perspectives of the Spartacist Nucleus of Italy," I consider it opportune that such materials be put in an internal bulletin to be published in preparation for the summer camp.

Fraternal greetings,

Fosco

SHARPE TO FOSCO

New York
30 April 1976

Nucleo Spartacista d'Italia
Federico
Black

Dear Comrade Fosco,

We received your letter dated the 14th on the 23rd: Bart and Federico are translating it as rapidly as possible, and I am writing in English in order to facilitate circulation to the entire tendency. I entirely agree with you that your most recent letters as well as mine should be translated and circulated. Comrade Bart suggested, and I agree, that it would be valuable to have the letters concerning the proposed cover, my letters of 5 and 6 April and this exchange published internally in Italian as well. We will plan to have all the letters available in English for the May meeting, at which it now seems clear that we will need a substantial amount of time--perhaps as much as half a day--to discuss the "Italian question."

As you will have seen from the volume of mail, we have mobilized the entire tendency to defend Mario Muñoz. In addition, we will have two internal bulletins available in time for the May meeting--everyone has been working harder than usual.

It seems to me that there are two basic and closely related criticisms contained in your letter (as well as a certain number of "empirical" questions which I will take up separately). The first is that the IS objectively (or possibly also subjectively) underestimates the importance of Italy in terms of reforging the Fourth International (i.e., the IS is Anglo-centric); and the second is that we have not devoted sufficient attention and resources to Italy specifically in terms of developing an Italian leadership. Underlying your pointed criticisms is what is at least a misunderstanding of our views and probably a misconception on your part. So while I also want to deal with some of the specific questions you raise, I agree that the question is basically political.

First, I should say that the IS is deformed by the fact that it is heavily centered on English-speaking countries. We have stated this fact over and over ever since our origin. We recognize this deformation and hence the crucial importance of establishing strong sections in other parts of the world. The fact that the IS is currently composed solely of Americans is a deformation (that is why Lenz is coming here, and why we project that other non-American comrades must be integrated into the IS as soon as possible). That our capacities for translation and the production of various foreign language material is severely limited could become a deformation if we do not take steps to remedy it. But you seem to feel that these deformations, whose source lies in our historical origins and development in Anglo-Saxon countries and the U.S. in particular, can be eliminated by a few pious wishes! (I will return to this point, which is central to your letter).

I. The Importance of Italy

We have always maintained (and repeated many times) that in our effort to develop new sections there are three factors which must be considered in deciding when and where to commit our cadre. The first is an overall analysis of which countries are strategically important in terms of the class struggle and of reforging the Fourth International as the party of world revolution. Objectively, Australia is not particularly important on a world-historical scale (except as a potential gateway to Asia and South Asia--and, for us, England). But does that mean that we should have demanded the liquidation of the New Zealand group and then the Australian section rather than reinforcing it? Objectively, the importance of the deformed and degenerated workers states is absolutely central. But at this point in time for us this cannot have any consequences in terms of "implantation." There is a strong tendency toward objectivism in your implicit argument that we should send comrades to countries which are strategically important. It is not enough to say that "such and such are the most important countries, therefore that is where we should commit forces." What is true is that we need a global plan: development of linguistic resources, systematic internationalization of our existing cadre, etc., so that we can take advantage of future opportunities when they occur.

Further, the strategic importance of a country is quite different from its conjunctural importance or from a conjunctural opportunity. Italy and Spain are conjuncturally important today, but strategically Japan and China are infinitely more important than they are. No one would argue that we should commit major forces to Japan before we send anyone to Italy (although we did in fact encourage one young comrade's desire to go to Japan to learn Japanese, the country, culture, etc.). Similarly, from an economic and strategic point of view, Germany is more important than Italy. The same is true of the U.S. (in fact a significant reason why the majority of the USec does not want a split is that they realize the importance of a section in the world center of imperialism).

Conjuncturally, and in terms of the immediate political situation on a world scale, it is certainly true that the level of class struggle in Italy and the Iberian peninsula (or Greece, Latin America and elsewhere) is greater than in Germany or England. But to speak, as you do, of an Italo-Iberian axis vs. an Anglo-Saxon-Germanic one, is demagogic. There is no necessity linking the two. Fosco, you systematically confuse the strategic importance of a particular country with a particular conjunctural situation.

In addition, it is fundamentally false--and typical of an objectivist methodology shared by both the Bordigists and the USec (with ultra-left and opportunist applications respectively)--to equate even the conjunctural level of the class struggle with the opportunities for building a Trotskyist party. In particular when we are very small, the possibility for building a Trotskyist nucleus may not depend on the level of the class struggle so much as on the situation and strength of other ostensible Trotskyists and, especially in the case of Italy, other centrist groups. It is no accident that despite the

level of class struggle in Italy, when Fosco and Federico wanted (coming from very different organizations) to find out what was going on in the "Trotskyist" movement, Fosco went to Paris, the world center of ostensible Trotskyism, and Federico went to London, where there is a plethora of small would-be Trotskyist groups.

The ability to make initial recruits depends very heavily on the conjunctural situation in the "Trotskyist" movement in various countries. Thus in Spain and Portugal, although there is tremendous ferment, it will probably pass us by even though we do everything conceivable (translations from sympathizers, friends of members, etc.) since we have no weight there, unless there is a major split in one of the groups (Varga, USec) and significant elements of the split find their way to our propagandā and positions, which is not easy. Otherwise, there is little chance of our being able to intervene, even though we have had a strong commitment in terms of putting out material in Spanish and Portuguese in relation to our available forces.

To make a rigid equation between the level of the class struggle and our capacity to build nuclei would represent a basic distortion of the struggle to reforge the Fourth International. This means that in many instances, we are indeed condemned to "miss the train," as you put it. To think otherwise is either wishful thinking or some kind of objectivism/voluntarism. We are not indifferent to this fact: by far the most painful recent example is, of course, Chile during the UP government and immediately after, when groups were in the throes of self-examination. If we had had any significant forces, we could have made significant inroads. While the OTR represents a major victory for us it is painful that we did not have the forces we now have in 1970. Naturally, if a pre-revolutionary situation were to arise in a country where we had an established section with measurable forces (e.g., Germany, Australia), we could commit all available forces to that country.

This logically leads to the question of what the conjunctural possibilities of recruitment actually are. Let us take some examples: England, Sweden, France and Italy. In England, given the extreme fragmentation of the British Trotskyoid left, and the continuing political ferment (without as yet any clear political differentiation) within virtually every group, however small, it is logical to suppose that there should be the possibility of recruiting cadre within one to two years. We committed forces to England based on its general importance (heart of the British Empire and hence important both in its own right and as a stepping stone to recruitment in many ex-colonies) and on the general estimation that given the ferment in the British left (fueled by the politico-economic situation, to which none of the groups have any coherent programmatic answer), we should be able to recruit. Finally, the objective possibility of committing forces--no language barriers and the possibility of getting work permits--existed for England in contrast to other EEC countries.

We committed comrades to France essentially because of its importance as the center of ostensible Trotskyists (and we had forces available). Although we thought we should be able to recruit, it was

essential to maintain at least a presence in Paris independent of recruitment. In fact, it took two years before we made our first cadre-level recruits and another year before there was any serious growth.

In the case of Sweden, we had received some letters expressing interest in our politics, and after two scouting trips to contact people who had written us, we believed (possibly wrongly, but in any case we acted too slowly so that by the time we committed cadre the possibility was essentially foreclosed) that there was a possibility of making immediate gains--perhaps a nucleus of five or six comrades. In addition, we had two comrades with a knowledge of Swedish and given the high level of English literacy in Sweden we were able to send a third middle-level comrade (qualitatively below the level required for Italy presently) to support them. At the time we made that commitment (summer of 1974), we chose Sweden over England (although not without opposition from some of the German comrades) as our next effort based on the expectation of immediate recruitment. When it became obvious that we had been mistaken, we liquidated Sweden.

In Italy, as I have already explained to you, we were aware that there was ferment in the USec, but our only contact was with Roberto and we were unable to get any concrete sense of what was going on (see the history of our contacts with Roberto in our open letter to him of August 1975). Furthermore, we had no Italian-speaking cadre.

This brings up the third consideration in relation to our effort to create new sections: availability of forces. This is extremely important in the sense that the lack of forces exercises a veto over what we can do. Fosco, you do not seem to understand this or to have any feeling for the implications of the fact that we are a small group--and until 1971 we were qualitatively smaller than we now are. In relation to non-English speaking countries this is essentially a question of linguistic capacity, and everything which follows from it, including relative ignorance of specific features and history of the working-class movement in various countries (cf. the discussion of the trade-union question). When we first projected concretely international expansion, we said that initial recruits were likely to speak English (or in any case more than one language) and to have had some experience with cultures other than their own. This has been the case, and we have been able (everywhere except Italy) to send a comrade who could communicate in English with leading comrades in other countries. Further, in other situations, we have had to "make do" with comrades who when they were assigned were junior comrades with very little or even no experience (Eric in Germany, Hunter in Paris, Eduardo with the Mexicans). It is to the credit of these comrades that we have been able to come this far!

Italy is another question. You completely ignore the fact that we do not have unlimited forces and that senior comrades do not become multi-lingual at the drop of a hat. In early 1975, in our entire tendency, there was one comrade who spoke Italian with any fluency (and he has since resigned)! That is, we had qualitatively less capacity in Italian than in Spanish (and it would have been irresponsible

to try to retrain the Spanish-speakers in Italian). We have made available for at least six months (and indefinitely if he develops well) a promising young comrade whose family is Italian and has some speaking knowledge, although he needs considerable further linguistic training. Furthermore, since this comrade comes from outside the U.S. (i.e., from a small section), this is a significant sacrifice. In addition, one other comrade has learned Italian sufficiently to be a central element in producing Italian material, and I have acquired a minimum reading knowledge of Italian.

Surely, Fosco, you would not suggest that we commit cadres to situations where they are totally incapable of speaking the language and where they cannot even communicate with the native comrades in that country? Even if we were able to free a comrade to go to Italy in order to learn Italian, it would be a year before he or she could communicate adequately (i.e., polemically) in Italian.

A crucial aspect of the question of forces is the necessity of making difficult choices between alternatives. We dispose of a very small pool of qualified (i.e., CC-level) comrades to undertake the task of establishing and consolidating a new section. The logic of your position, Fosco, is that we should not have sent anyone to England and instead committed one or two CCers to learning Italian (thus rendering them virtually inoperative for almost a year), since we must have CCers in London if we are to have a station there and since we could not do both.

So there are many complicating factors involved in efforts to "colonize" a station and build a new section. In England, we wanted to establish ourselves in competition with Gerry Healy beginning immediately after the 1966 split, but did not have the forces to do so. In addition, it was clearly essential to expand outside English-speaking countries and we did not have comrades with necessary backgrounds (passports, accents, skills) to move to England immediately. There is an inevitable time lag between our appetites and our capacity to realize them as well as between the opening of an opportunity and our ability to take advantage of it. We naturally seek to reduce this as much as possible, and when we do have the capacity--as in Sweden--we have to move as fast as possible. But in many cases the "time lag" means that opportunities are lost. In Sweden, we did not move fast enough to take advantage of any opening which may have existed. In Italy, with no available Italian-speaking cadre, it was impossible, and indeed would have been irresponsible (i.e., useless at best) to have tried to move to Italy faster than we did.

We do not claim to be infallible, and one of the crucial functions of our leading cadre internationally even at this stage is to act as a corrective to any tendencies toward parochialism or routinism which may exist even without our being aware of them. So no one disputes the validity of raising this question: I am simply arguing that you are wrong concerning the specific examples you raise.

The fact that we take reality into account does not mean that we have no political perspectives or that we suffer from "indeterminanza di prospettiva politiche, nascosta dietro una patina di orga-

nizzativismo" (hesitancy concerning political perspectives hidden behind a screen of organizational-ism"). It does mean that it is a serious political error to attempt to equate "objective reality" (in which the conjunctural aspects of the class struggle are included) with the possibility of constructing small nuclei, and that the forces available to the organization set limits--in some cases absolute --over what we can accomplish in the immediate future. We do not attempt to draw a detailed road map of the shortest path to the construction of new sections in the process of reforging the Fourth International (as does the USec). Especially in view of our limited forces, we must give high priority to conjunctural opportunities. I would remind you of the paragraph concerning Italy in the August 1974 "Memorandum on the International Movement" (Discussion Bulletin No. 24), over six months before we had any contacts in Italy:

"Comrades of the iSt have in the past had substantial contact with the Italian TMR, in particular with leadership elements. Although we do not now have the forces or language capacity to orient to the Italian situation, we should pay close and continuing attention to developments there and attempt to involve elements of the TMR in serious discussion."

When the concrete possibility of such "serious discussion" arose, we concentrated all our resources on it (as you will no doubt recall, Fosco, from the volume of letters in April-May-June of 1975).

Furthermore, you can hardly claim not to know our general battle plan, since what I consider to be the most developed presentation to date on our strategy and path toward the formation of an International Trotskyist League was the presentation I made to Gioacchino in Naples in February 1976 at which you, Giulio and Federico were present and which Giulio has on tape.

II. Building National Leaderships

The question of forces available is closely tied to that of intervention by the IS and the problems involved in building national and international leaderships. The international leadership (IEC) cannot be constructed except on the basis of strong national leadership (which in turn the existing international leadership must help to build). Outside intervention cannot be a substitute for strong national leadership for any period of time. What the IS can do and does do is to assist such developments in various ways, usually by sending cadre to assist the leading comrades in new national groups to fully assimilate our history, political line and organizational norms. It is no accident that the full sections outside the U.S. are those with developed national leaderships (Australia and Germany), whereas the sympathizing sections and stations did not or have not developed a functional national leadership as yet (Austria, France, Canada--and of course Israel and Sweden).

To argue that what is needed in Italy is a leading comrade in whom the IS has "full political confidence" is wrong in two ways (aside from being somewhat utopian). Most importantly, it is based on an incorrect evaluation of Fosco's capacities--both acting alone

and in conjunction with Federico. Leading comrades in the center have always been impressed by your assessments of various OROs in Italy, by the method in which you went about intervening, by your evaluation of priorities. I would point in particular to your letter of 11 October and the "Motion" of 18 October 1975 (which we translated into English) and the way in which you acted quickly to attempt to take advantage of any opening that might exist with Gioacchino's group (this is of course independent of the final outcome). In short, we have always agreed with your letters and analyses of the situation, which is the main reason why there has not been more intervention from New York. Our intervention on the question of the cover for the paper (after consulting internationally) should stand as proof that when we do have a political disagreement there is no hesitation or delay in intervening! Lastly, I would point out that comrades' evaluation of you is reflected in the discussions (informal and tentative at this point) of who should be considered for IEC membership in an elected IEC (not including the U.S.): Australia, two full and one alternate; Austria, none; Canada, none; France, one alternate; Germany, two full and one alternate; Italy, one full.

Unlike Austria or Canada (or even France), the Italian comrades do not, I believe, need someone from outside to actually run (i.e., be political chairman of) the section. They do need a serious cadre, who speaks Italian, and who by his (her) knowledge of Spartacist norms and functioning can help fill out the Italian comrades' knowledge of our history, political line and organizational practices. We do not have such a comrade, but we are sending the best that we have. The formation of the Italian leadership must--and in my opinion can--come from the existing comrades, from a team of Federico-Fosco. It cannot come from IS substitutionism. This is why we wanted Federico to come to the U.S., it is why we insisted that Fosco come to the U.S. summer camp, make trips to Paris, and so on. We need to internationalize and assimilate you, we do not need an alternate leadership!

The question of editorial capacity for the paper is a function of the question of leadership. It seems apparent to me, Fosco, that you do not understand this question. We are not "offering" editorial autonomy! Rather, a section should not put out its own press until it has the capacity to be editorially independent! If it is unable to be editorially independent (even if that includes leaning heavily on translations/reprints from Workers Vanguard), it should not put out a paper. That is why, in our discussion of the question, it seemed clear to me--and as I recall was explicit in the discussion--that we were talking about a paper in September. It is clear that there would be certain problems if you were to edit a paper alone at this point, but I think that you in collaboration with Federico could in fact do it (I will return to this question).

You are under an illusion concerning Station Stockholm (and also Paris) in this regard. The comrades in charge of Station Stockholm and Station Paris were excellent comrades, but each have their own weaknesses. In particular, they were strictly enjoined not to put out their own propaganda, because they were not politically and editorially competent to do so! Even now, the question of a paper for the

LTF--specifically in light of the glaring lack of adequate editorial capacity--continues to be a sharply disputed point.

The second part of your request--that the IS "adopt a more active policy toward some groups with which we are in contact" is linked to one of our criticisms of you, namely that you have been content to take a secondary role in meetings with those groups. On a factual level, the implicit assumption that the IS has been passive is outrageous. To begin with, it (as usual) leaves out the question of available forces. To my knowledge, there are only two comrades on the SL CC who can read Italian to any degree: Norden (editor of WV) and myself--and I read it poorly. The amount to which we can be "more active" is therefore very limited.

Secondly, and most important, the questions which you consider "exceptions" to our "passivity"--namely elaborating a line on the 15 June elections and combatting a tendency toward abstract propagandism in your articles--are not minor questions of detail! They are central questions of political line (attitude toward the PCI) and of "forming a leadership" (editorial capacity)! When one adds to that that until now we have agreed with your assessment of the Italian groups, the situation in Italy, and our perspectives there, all the major elements of our present line in Italy are included.

In any case, however, the question of "IS intervention" is a false issue. We have always been very clear that our information concerning other countries is very incomplete; that we are hesitant to make certain tactical decisions as well as decisions concerning major questions where traditions and circumstances are very different (the trade-union question, for example). Why, Fosco, do you assume that "the IS" is all-wise about all the countries in the world? Or at any rate that it "ought" to be all-wise? It would be just as absurd to accuse you of not being sufficiently internationalist because you have made little input in elaborating policy in the U.S. (or more realistically, France), as to say that we have been passive on the question of Italy.

You have always tended to assume that intervention is one-directional: it is up to the IS to intervene, the IS "offers" editorial independence, etc. This completely neglects the fact that the process is dialectical. On the one hand the national leadership plays the central role in elaborating policy for a particular country. The International contributes to the elaboration of a general political line and on specific questions of particular importance (e.g., June 15 elections and the press question), while leaving implementation largely to the national section (unless it feels that serious mistakes are being committed). As our leading bodies become more fully international in experience and composition, as they acquire authority, and as our material resources expand, it will be increasingly possible to have a full discussion internationally, that is, a higher level of international intervention. At the same time, as our national leaderships become more competent and developed, and therefore need help less, the IEC assimilates this experience as well and becomes more capable of offering specific advice, cautions, etc.--i.e., more capable of intervening. If Lenz is coming to New York to

be integrated into the IS for a period, it is precisely because this process has been occurring in Germany over the last two years.

Lastly, it is here that "empirical" questions enter most strongly. You object that Station London did not function properly with respect to the Italian Nucleus in the first period after Federico's recruitment. Not only is this true--as we have clearly stated before --but the question of functioning was a general problem, and is a central reason why the comrade initially designated as the head of Station London is no longer head of Station London. You cannot demand that we be perfect, only that we acknowledge and fight to correct our errors! The question of getting adequate reports from the French comrades of the LTF has also been a chronic problem over which we have waged periodic fights for over two years. However, you must also recognize that they are tremendously overburdened. In contrast, the full German section did not have to be told to send you a copy of Dino's (Rome) recent letter to Susi, and their reaction to the Susi-in-Italy problem was quite different.

But let us in fact examine the record of the IS concerning intervention in Italy. First, we insisted that Lesueur take a major responsibility for work in Italy, thereby weakening the French section and more importantly the possibility of developing an integrated French leadership more rapidly. Second, if you actually look at the trips to Italy and the efforts that have been expended, in relation to our forces, it is clear that they are considerable. In October we sent an international team of five comrades to Italy for the meeting of the "Coordinating Committee" (now Falcemartello). That we overestimated the importance of the meeting is of course irrelevant in terms of judging our commitment to Italy. Lesueur has made at least one other trip. Black met with the GBL, and we sent one of our leading trade unionists when he was in Europe. In February, I came to Italy for six out of 21 days in Europe (more than any other country). You seem to ignore (again!) the linguistic problem. Suppose that the IS rep had visited you several times: what good would it have done you if he had come (as he almost inevitably would have had to) without a translator?

Next year, however, our rep in Europe will speak French, thus facilitating communication. In addition, we will have two English-speakers in Federico and Bart. Thus it is "easily documentable" that our commitment to Italy has taken up a high proportion of our available resources--especially when account must be taken of the fact that it takes us (me) much longer to deal with material in Italian than in French or German. In February it was clear to me the extent to which you felt isolated. Since then, we have put you on the high priority mailing list, and you should have been receiving substantially more material than was the case previously.

So in summary, it seems to me that there are several political weaknesses/differences which underlie these questions, and which we have discussed before. The first is a tendency toward objectivism, manifested in your apparent refusal to believe that our material and human resources are limited, and also in the tendency toward abstract propagandism in the articles you have written. What I do not

quite understand is why, even after a visit to New York (however short and unsatisfactory), you continue to believe that if we do not do something it is necessarily because we do not want to do it (voluntarism, the other side of objectivism). But apparently you are not satisfied with our answers to these questions, including on the level of concrete functioning.

The second main point has to do with functioning and international democratic centralism. I think that there are strong remnants (at best) of some peculiar combination of Bordigism and the USec lurking behind this, although I am at a loss to define it precisely. You seem to believe that every political evaluation and general assessment of a situation (much less specific decisions) must be embodied in a formal motion. While the lack of more formal motions and meetings is to some extent a weakness of the IS (reflecting the fact that I am the only member of the IS whose main responsibility is international work), you seem not to believe that genuine collective work is possible. The letters that I write on any central question (for example, on the question of the cover, or this letter--which has taken almost a week to produce) are done in consultation with other leading comrades. On the question of the cover, our decision was taken after polling all members of the IS, plus Norden and Samuels (and several other members of the SL/U.S. PB, as well as Federico). So even without a formal motion, it is nonetheless a collective decision.

The specific aspects of the paper are a somewhat separate question, although I have dealt with the question of "editorial autonomy" as part of the leadership question. As far as the concrete possibility of editing a paper, it seems to both Norden and myself that although there is a certain tendency to abstract propagandism, your articles have been improving. Further, we fully recognize that assimilating our press policy and style takes a certain amount of time, so that the difficulties which have existed thus far should not be insurmountable. Further, I think that in collaboration with Federico--when you can actively collaborate other than by letter--you will be capable of bringing out the kind of paper we discussed in February, i.e., issues of particular interest to Italy, on a semi-regular basis. Federico probably has a better journalistic sense than you, but you clearly have a more acute sense of overall presentation and purpose (cf. the discussion on the Posadas article). That is why I always projected that the paper would come out at the earliest in September, i.e., after Federico's arrival.

Concerning the specific proposal of a major issue before the elections in June, it seems to me that it will be materially impossible. Even if it were possible from your end, it will be virtually impossible for us in New York to write a commentary on the 1939-40 election discussion. We are very heavily investing our human resources in the May meetings, and again, it is a question of resources. We do, however, need at least one article on the elections, and I think it would be possible to put out a short issue incorporating that article plus excerpts from the article concerning the June 15 elections if Federico is moving to Genova by May 10.

Although I had hoped to stay mainly in Paris in May, it seems obvious that I should plan to be in Italy sometime between about the 20 and 26 May. We should try to meet with the GBL and possibly Il Soviet (perhaps over that weekend). In addition, I need to spend a couple of days in Feltrinelli doing some research on the origins of the OCI.

Judging from Lotta Continua, and allowing for the bias in reading only one paper, it seems that they are gaining ground from the polemics with AO and PdUP (the latest issue is 24 April that we have received).

Comradely greetings,

Sharpe

cc: Group II

MAY MOTIONS

The following motions were passed by a meeting in Milan in May 1976.

Present: Sharpe, Black, Fosco, Federico, Bart, Giulio.

Motion: In the next immediate period, public interventions by members of the Nucleo Spartacista d'Italia must be subordinate to the internal tasks of the organization, and thus limited to carefully selected occasions. In particular, Comrade Federico in Genova should avoid casual encounters with the GBL to the extent possible. More formal discussions with the GBL should not take place without prior consultation with Comrade Fosco. In the context of our limited resources, we should seek a public presence and intervention in meetings and activities of other groups, especially the GCR.

In an attempt to reduce the physical separation of members of the NSd'I, the entire group should attempt to meet every other week in an appropriate location. The NSd'I should begin to establish a formal organizational framework, in particular a financial structure.

passed unanimously

Motion: The NSd'I will try to produce an article/open letter on the elections along the lines of the discussion at this meeting.

passed unanimously

Motion: That Comrade Bart be the treasurer for the Nucleo.

passed unanimously

Motion: That Comrade Fosco be responsible for all aspects of the Nucleo's press capacity (including internally), after having consulted with Comrade Federico and other members of the Nucleo.

passed unanimously

FEDERICO TO I.S.

Genova
21 August 1976

I.S., New York
cc: NSpd'I
LTF/Rep.
London Sta.

Dear Comrade Sharpe,

After the rich experience of the summer camp, I think it is both necessary and possible for me to draw some conclusions as a partial balance sheet, and to pose some problems to your attention.

There are three main points:

- 1st perspectives;
- the situation of the Italian Nucleus;
- the "PCI-PSI-T.U. Government"/Workers Government/United Front/ Critical Support Question (a contribution to a necessary discussion).

(The third point will be dealt with in a subsequent letter.)

1st Perspectives

To introduce this point, let me recall that I joined the 1st shortly after the 25th of November 1975, when the Portuguese defeat compelled me to draw some more active political conclusions. These were centered around the need, in Portugal--as well as everywhere else and on an international level--for a Bolshevik Party, able to organize the working masses for the seizure of state power.

Only Workers Vanguard--among the various "left anti-Pabloite Trotskyist" papers--answered my questions, and the SL/U.S.-1st appeared to me as the Bolshevik Party, however embryonic.

The integration of a comrade in a revolutionary organization is a two-fold process: the comrade wants some political answers/explanations from the organization, and vice-versa.

In our concrete experience, when the essential positions and principles of the 1st had been clarified to me, through discussions and through the reading of the basic documents, it was the 1st that began questioning me.

This was obviously a necessity for the organization and, although I thought some aspects of the discussions were not really central, I recognized the need of clarifying beyond any possible doubt issues like the importance of carefulness in writing political letters/documents, the history of the Posadista faction, the POUM, etc.

Another priority was, at the same time, my acquaintance with the history of the SL/U.S., through a careful reading of the Internal Bulletins--especially those on the "Ellens-Turner faction" and

the "Cunningham-Moore-Treiger cliquists"--and of the Marxist Bulletins.

However, [there] remained an important point to be discussed, that is, how the iSt projects its activities toward the reforging of the F.I., as the World Party of the Socialist Revolution, i.e., able to lead the proletarian revolution to victory.

Whilst some essential elements had been clarified--for instance, Comrade Sharpe's presentation in Naples gave me some useful insights --the necessity of a fairly deep discussion is felt strongly by me.

When Comrade Fosco's letter of April 14 "opened fire" I was a bit too much worried than it was the case then, but after Comrade Sharpe's answer (April 30) I hoped that at the May meeting we could have a nice discussion on iSt perspectives. Unfortunately, this was not the case, and any such discussion was avoided in the following period of time.

Today, I feel we have to go over this question, because the Muñoz campaign is successfully over, and we have just had the European summer camp. On which some considerations are pertinent.

The summer camp gave possibilities [for] social contacts among comrades, building the basis for good working relations. That's quite important: a Communist International cannot be built only on the basis of its program and politics, it has to put together different human beings [who] must find a way of working together also when they disagree on some particular issue, etc.

However, the central political discussions were hurt by the limits imposed by a tight agenda, and also by the lack of previous discussion materials. So that, whilst the presentations themselves were really useful developments of our tendency's understanding of different questions--related mainly to the European workers' movement, on such points like the "Workers' Government/Critical Support/United Front Question" and also the "Press"--the debate showed definitely a lack of homogeneity and above all, of clarity--and, thus, the need for further discussions. I will return [to] that later.

With some reservation [of] my judgement, as this was my first experience of this kind, I have the impression that although such meetings are quite useful, in the middle and long run we will have to organize two different kinds of meetings.

The iSt needs:

1) educationals where the basic positions and new achievements could be presented to the whole of our organizations in a given area; and,

2) conferences where leading comrades of the sections should discuss our activity plans for the various countries and internationally, and also focus on some theoretical points and on strategic-tactical questions.

That implies the possibility of more and longer meetings, of more comrades involved in international work from different sections, of more international discussion material, in short of more human and financial resources. We [don't have] them, and this is a problem.

Taking up this problem, I want to make some considerations, in relation also to the April exchange between the I.S., Fosco and me.

In April, as I made clear in my (24 April) letter, my position was different from Fosco's, whilst later I found myself in agreement with the I.S. (30 April) answer. At present, I still believe that Fosco's line was basically wrong; however, in the light of the summer camp, it seems to me that the I.S.' position on this issue tends actually to be routinist.

A little incident, during the Italian commission meeting, upset me. In his presentation Fosco had some critical considerations re: the I.S.' "insufficient communications with the sections"; Sharpe stated he was annoyed by that, since this question had already been posed previously by Fosco, and, as another comrade said: "Fosco's positions were in line with his (April 14) letter." As this point was nowhere discussed, in my view it is still deserving some more attention than getting annoyed.

My understanding of the iSt activities is that we are trying to present the iSt as an orthodox Trotskyist pole for revolutionary regroupment with forces still within reformist/centrist ostensible Trotskyist organizations, building stable propaganda groups wherever it is both possible and convenient for us.

In pursuing this task, we try to exploit any concrete possibility, without much regard as to the conjunctural and/or strategical importance of a given country. Thus, we have plans based on our own desires and on subjective possibilities: splits, actual or eventual, of ostensible Trotskyist groups, existence and [availability] of comrades with the necessary capacity/skills, etc.

What is needed, from my viewpoint, is a general project--not only a memorandum on the international movement, related necessarily to our present possibilities and plans--a hypothesis of international perspectives toward the reforging of the F.I.

[I] hope it is clear enough that I am not partisan of having some get-rich-quick scheme, nor am I advocating a Pabloite theorization of "centuries of deformed workers states," nor the Spartacusbund's cowardly "Stop the revolution in Portugal! There is no Party to make it!"

When Lenin organized the Party, he did so on the basis of an analysis of the objective conditions, which could lead to an upsurge of mass struggles, where the Party would be decisive. Thus 1903 was decisive for 1917. The Third and Fourth Internationals, again, were organized on the granite foundations of revolutionary principles and program, but based themselves on concrete and

realistic revolutionary perspectives.

It is true, however, that the iSt is still a very young tendency, small and weak, with a potentially dangerous deformation being mainly centered on the U.S. and almost completely on English-speaking countries. So that it may be logical for the iSt not to try to look too forward in its future, because we have to keep connected with the day-to-day work.

However, the building of a communist cadre requires the combination of a living knowledge of the history of the world communist movement and of the revolutionary theory which embodies the past experiences, together with a clear understanding of the road for the socialist revolution. (See, for reference to these problems: Cannon, The First Ten Years of American Communism, Pathfinder, pages 28 to 31.)

A last point on that, is a comment on some talks I have heard at the summer camp, on the question of the so-called "revolutionary optimism." I could not really grasp what the comrades meant [by] that. However, the iSt not being a Pabloite organization, "revolutionary optimism" means something necessarily very far from the evolutionist/liquidationist concept--"the revolution is inexorably progressing, etc., etc." Nevertheless, I have learned to appreciate Gramsci's "pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will" as a more accurate description of what is needed from revolutionists.

* * * * *

The Italian Nucleus

The same I.S. motion that admitted me as a full member of the iSt stated that the I.S. wanted me in Italy [by] the fall. I believe now that this decision was a mistake, because the results of its implementation have been: 1) that I was/am not in the same town [as] Fosco, and 2) still worse, I was damaged by the isolation felt strongly essentially inside my own organization. You know that, as comrade Black should have reported [to] you [about] my "evident demoralization," which he referred to at the June 30 meeting of the Nucleus.

A better solution would have been to keep me for a longer period of time in London, and to send me to Italy only where I could work with Fosco, and only after any misunderstanding or main difference had been resolved, or in the way of being resolved.

In fact, retrospectively, I cannot understand at all Fosco's position that my presence would have been valuable or "very useful" (April 24, letter). In fact, when [I] arrived in Italy, I was bound to stay at home without making any political intervention, so that all my activity--translations and the written comments on the draft of the "Open Letter"--could have just been done everywhere!

I know that men are shaped through hard tests, and as you said in your presentation on "Genesis of European Pabloism," "a real cadre

can be built only passing through more than one characteristic historical period." Thus, I should perhaps say, "optimistically," that insofar as I didn't quit, I am now a more solid member of the ISt. However, sometimes a scratch can lead to gangrene.

[There is] nothing we can do to change the past; hopefully we will not blame ourselves in the future.

Regarding the present situation, you stated--in Sharpe's letter of July 29--that "things seem to be going somewhat better in Italy." I share this opinion, essentially because there has been a painful beginning of a working collaboration between Fosco and me, and we have already succeeded in coordinating some activities, in planning out future work, etc.

But some important problems do exist.

Fosco has some differences with the ISt, some of which have to be discussed as they have an important relevance to our Italian work. (For instance, Grisolia claims to be in agreement with the "PCI-PSI-etc. Government" slogan raised in WV No. 74--you can easily imagine how he could hit us, if he takes up this point, before we have got a common I.S./Nucleus position.) Other questions may be kept in abeyance being either not really decisive (obligatory dues structure) or insofar as they have not an immediate relation with our activities. There seems to exist some differences between Fosco and me, which I didn't investigate so far, because they seem to be both unclarified and immediately non-relevant.

Furthermore, since the Milan meeting in May, I have tried to be a disciplined member of the Italian group. But there are situations in which a discussion arises between the Nucleo (Fosco) and the I.S. I have three possibilities: to defend my own position, where such exists; to support the I.S. line where it is clearly better; and to support Fosco, directly or indirectly, in any other case, especially on Italy, taking into consideration the avowed ignorance of the I.S. re: the Italian situation. In any case, wherever a difference arose between me and Fosco, I concealed it, again because this seemed to me to be logical application of the Milan meeting, if I wanted to survive politically for a while.

Obviously, this can be only a temporary situation; the present letter is in some way an attempt to get out of it, based on my understanding of two points of Comrade Robertson's presentation:

- that we have to have, [to] some degree, a "partypatriotism";
- that one has to know what is worth a discussion, what a fight, what a split.

With Bolshevik greetings,
Federico

P.S. Particularly the first part of this letter is not an example of clarity. It could be dismissed as "irrelevant elucubrations of a half-regenerated Posadista"; however, I would like to emphasize that reality is in itself something contradictory, and our organization obviously is under the pressure of this contradictory reality.

SHARPE TO FEDERICO

New York
10 September 1976

[Genova]

Dear Federico,

I got your letter and wanted to reply to it at some length. In many ways this exchange represents a continuation of the exchange with Fosco in April, in particular on the question of a "plan." There seem to me to be two central political questions involved--the question of a "plan" ("how the iSt projects its activities toward the reforging of the F.I.") and how one handles political discussion and differences (the last page of your letter), as well as some specific details. Since some of the details have bearing on the more general question, I want to deal with them first.

A central factual point concerning a "plan" has to do with the discussions around the April exchange of letters during the May meetings in Paris and Milan. Contrary to what you say, there was a discussion of these points with Fosco which was lengthy and heated and centered on dissuading him from launching a several-hours attack on you at the Paris meetings, arguing that we could have meetings in Milan to take up that question (which we did). Fosco raised two other points at that time: his sense of isolation from the IS and need for a CC member (or the political equivalent thereof) in Italy. Although we maintained (and still maintain) that there is no comrade available for Italy, as a result of Fosco's intervention we actively tried to find someone who would meet the needs of the Nucleo and (an essential addition) who we could make available for Italy. We were unable to find anyone. Concerning the "lack of communication": Italy is now part of the Group I mailings and receives all the international mailings (which we are attempting to increase). In Fosco's report to the Paris meeting, he stated that communication had improved. In my opinion it remained at a relatively high level between May and the summer camp. The result of informal discussions before the May meeting was that Fosco withdrew significant parts of his April letters in his report in May.

I therefore concluded that the problem had been essentially resolved, which is why I said I was annoyed when Fosco brought it up again, as if the May meetings had simply never happened. My annoyance stemmed from the following pattern (which has been apparent over a period of time now and not just on this question). A problem is raised, we have a discussion, you (or Fosco) withdraw the point (leading me to conclude, in particular on technical problems which involve availability of resources, that the problem has been resolved), but the next time we meet the problem is raised again, as if there had never been any discussion. The case of a

"plan" is a case in point. Over a period of time such differences can become central political differences (cf., Fosco's positive reference to the Bordigist model of international functioning at the summer camp meeting).

A significant part of this difficulty has to do with the other central point in your letter, the appropriate way of handling political discussions and eventually differences, to which I will return. In my opinion, a large part of the difficulties we have had is that you (and especially Fosco) fail to attempt to integrate yourselves into the leadership at meetings such as the summer camp, i.e., long, informal discussions about things which are bothering you. Only to a secondary degree is this due to objective problems (lack of time).

"Five-Year Plans"

All of this leads to the central political question of what I would call the "five-year plan" (or its absence). My objection to your desire for a "concrete" projection--or even a "hypothesis" can be put succinctly: when we have state power we can talk about a five-year plan, but not before. I have the strong suspicion that comrades who continue to want to make "plans" or "projections" of the sort you propose are in fact suffering from the aftereffects of the blueprints for "five-year plans" in Pabloite or Posadista organizations (or more generally, from one of the political and organizational consequences of a tendency to economism and objectivism). This is not an isolated phenomenon, peculiar to Italy: we have had the same argument elsewhere, and there were not dissimilar polemics around the question of "planning" an insurrection in the CI in the 1920's.

You say that Lenin organized the Party "on the basis of an analysis of the objective conditions, which could lead to an upsurge of mass struggles where the Party would be decisive." What does this mean precisely? In the sense that this is true, namely that the Leninist conception of the party (which in 1903 was not completed) is derived from a Marxist analysis of reality, it is trivial, indeed a tautology for us. But if you mean that Lenin's analysis led him, even before 1914, to believe that Russia was the centrally important country for the revolution, then it is demonstrably false. Lenin (and all orthodox Marxists at that time) believed that Germany was the central country--but that did not mean sending the CC of the Bolshevik Party to Germany! If you mean that the Leninist model of organization is specific to "Russian conditions" (which I don't think you do), then we do indeed have a serious difference.

Similarly, exactly what you mean by "concrete and realistic revolutionary perspectives" is not clear to me. In the 1920's this was based on the existence of mass revolutionary parties; in the 1930's and the immediate post-war period on tremendous class upheavals. Our situation is not in essence directly comparable to the situation you describe. What then do you mean?

One characteristic of the USec is its obsession with "concrete

and realistic" (i.e., opportunistic) perspectives. Thus, Mandel's draft document (written in 1972-1973) for the Tenth World Congress had just such a "five-year plan" complete with predictions. And of course Posadas specialized in such "predictions." The feeling that without such a plan one cannot function almost inevitably leads to the search for "shortcuts" in order to "fulfill the plan." We have tried to be very careful not to fall into this trap. Our perspectives and tasks documents, for example, invariably speak of the "next period" (and not "next year" or the "next x years") for just this reason. It is never possible to say in advance how long the "next period" will be. And we have argued against the French and Germans not to include formulations such as "in the coming year we will do x" in their documents. It is significant that the groups which are the most worried about our "plan" (or lack thereof)--the GBL, Gioacchino in Naples, etc.--are centrists which tend to be unserious.

I think that there has been a failure to assimilate the discussion around the April exchange of letters or, for example, my presentation in Naples in February. I also think that this is not a problem which is specific to Italy, but at one level or another is fairly widespread in the organization. You should again refer to my April 30 letter, which goes into some of our past practice. To summarize, it is simply not correct that we have built stations "without much regard to the conjunctural and/or strategical importance of a given country." We have consciously created two stations from scratch: France and England. Groups in other countries have been built because the first elements came to us (or because, as in Sweden, there appeared to be an immediate, short-term recruitment possibility). Given that it is impossible for security reasons to create a station in Spanish-speaking countries, I would defend those priorities (especially since they have to be taken in conjunction with our limitations in terms of human resources).

What, then, are the "concrete and realistic perspectives" in the next period? It is basically simple: to build toward stable propaganda groups with a regular press and an apparatus (i.e., approximately 30-50 members). As we have noted, building an organization tends to go in cycles. In Europe for the past two years we have been consolidating the first recruits to Spartacism: now we have to move from consolidating a few individuals politically to building functioning organizations. That is one central reason why there are crises in France and Germany, and why generally one can expect a crisis after the first stage of accumulation (at the level of, say, 30-50 comrades, essentially depending on the speed with which they are recruited and the quality of the leadership). If these crises are resolved, we can expect a period of growth and then probably another crisis. There is, of course, no way of ensuring that any organization will surmount the various crises it passes through, particularly in the more fragile stages. Our tasks for the foreseeable future (next five years) are still at this level.

Any formulation of the form "in five years the 1st will have x members in y countries and we can project the following activities..." represents a fundamentally false methodology. The problem

with "a hypothesis" is that it can only be one of many and is not necessarily more likely to be fulfilled than a number of other hypotheses. One of the things which takes place in informal discussions in the middle of the night is precisely speculation about various possible "hypotheses." But to reduce a hypothesis to writing raises the expectations among our comrades that it is a specific projection, that is, the path along which we will travel and if, as is likely, things do not turn out that way, there is disappointment, demoralization, etc. There must necessarily be many hypotheses. To reduce this indeterminacy would be to fall victim to positivism.

At the same time, our global priorities in the next period are clear. First, Spanish-language areas are a priority, as has already been clear from the volume of material we have produced. Secondly, one of the key paths toward breaking into (for us) new areas--Africa, Asia, Latin America--will be exile and student centers, in particular Paris and London. (Look at how Fosco came in contact with us--in Paris.) Parties are built from the top down and our stress must be on recruiting people who will be the leadership of national sections or who can recruit such a leadership. This is true internationally as well, and given our resources our international work must be tightly centralized. Our original predictions--that our first recruits in any given country would probably speak at least one other language and have spent time outside their native country--have been overwhelmingly born out.

We do have the perspective of moving the IS to Europe although the exact country is unclear. When? When some European section has the material basis to service and support it (i.e., approximately 50 Germans or the equivalent in terms of income and capacities). I don't know when that will take place, but certainly not before two more years. In the meantime, we will probably not be able to establish stations in, or qualitatively reinforce non-English language-speaking areas, if the comrades involved do not already speak the language (including familiarity with the culture). There is a possibility that we will have to pay for rapid acquisition of language skills (Berlitz is very expensive, but effective).

One of the essential negative considerations which limit us--and which I think you have not fully assimilated, although you mention it--has to do with lack of forces. You say we lack forces, but the implications of this are not always clear. For example, we could "internationalize" the IS and construct a five or seven person IS including, say, Kruger, Logan, Fosco. This would be a very powerful center--but it would destroy WV, Germany, Italy, probably Australia--in short, the iSt. We have said that, other things being equal, we will not destroy or seriously damage an existing national group simply to reinforce the IS. Some of the implications of a "strategy" would in fact amount to that. Thus, it would be valuable for both Fosco and Federico to spend substantial time in New York, but...

This is linked, among other things, to the question of educa-

tionals and conferences. Educationalals are needed primarily by the sections. International educationalals must necessarily be of a general nature, or serve to reveal areas which need further discussion (as happened on some points at the camp).

We do need conferences. During the course of the past year, we have had three: in November, May and at the summer camp. We project continuing to have such meetings at approximately that rate (three times per year) for the next period. Unfortunately, we do not have the resources of the USec, and many of our leading comrades (IEC) in Europe have jobs. We cannot therefore afford the luxury of more than an extended weekend for meetings. However, we do attempt to prepare the meetings (as in February and May) by trips and informal discussions preceding them so that we can make the best possible use of the time available. The question of material resources comes out also in small things; for example, Gi's accusation that we were discriminating against him by not having independent Italian translation at the summer camp is merely the repetition on a more trivial level of Fosco's accusation that we discriminate against Italy. It does not seem to me that you have fully assimilated this problem as part of your day-to-day thinking.

Italy and the Five-Year Plan

Now concerning Italy in relation to all this. You do not give an accurate account of the historical development of the current situation. We had, at various times, two central "hypotheses," neither of which have come about (hence some of your own concerns). The first, formed last summer, was that Fosco, Gi and P should move within a year to somewhere in the industrial triangle (since at that time we posited the necessity of six transfers). This did not quite work out and some of the current problems/tensions are due to that fact. The hypothesis you are more familiar with concerns yourself. You will recall that originally, and in February, our plan was that you should stay in London, go to the U.S. for two months, and get a new job in Italy beginning in September "in the same town as Fosco."

A number of difficulties arose: first, there was.... Then, there was the job question. You could not transfer and despite our objections were afraid you would be unable to get a job. So when your current job opportunity came along, and your hesitations were clear, there was agreement you should take the job (which also meant moving immediately). As I recall, you were rather surprised when I raised with you the possibility of moving to Torino to be with Fosco (in May in Milan). I raise this not to blame anyone, but simply as an example of the problem with forming "hypotheses" in too definitive a fashion. I believe it would have been an error to insist on carrying out the original "plan" even though it corresponds to our strategic needs in Italy at the present time.

Above all, we must have a centralized conception of building a party and an international. That is, parties are built from the top down, and we must at all times maintain a functioning center,

not decentralized little groups, individuals, etc. There is a natural tendency to try to do this (at one time the TLD speculated on a second West German local in addition to Vienna; you proposed having the central comrades in three different cities for a year) as a response to the felt tasks of the organization, but it must be fought. Moving you to Italy corresponded to the need for centralization, given that the more desirable alternative was not feasible, largely due to what you presented as objective difficulties.

Thus, your own argumentation is contradictory: you argue that we need a plan, but against the first tenet of such a plan, namely centralization. I am not at all sure that the difficulties which have existed would have been substantially easier if you had stayed in England--by your own admission, the past few months have seen "the painful beginning of a working collaboration between Fosco and me"--necessarily a cornerstone for any future growth.

In my view there has been considerable progress in the one year of the Nucleo's existence. First, we now have the beginnings of a collective leadership, due largely to the fact that you have been in Italy. Second, there has been a political differentiation among the morass which existed on the left fringe of the USec last spring (Roberto, Falcemartello, the Gioacchino grouping, groups in Tarento, GBL). In that respect, a hypothesis: within six months we will split with the GBL, possibly recruiting some individuals within a year after that time, but not at the moment of the split (this is a frequent pattern, look at the recruitment out of the Spartacusbund, in the U.S. and P-O). I also suspect the [GBL] letter to Lotta Continua shows that the syndicalists are gaining ground (Gianfranco, etc.). Third, due to the hard work of the comrades and a certain amount of abuse of Bart, we have a certain reputation and some contacts throughout Italy. Finally, there is now the concrete possibility of recruitment (Ju, D) and the beginnings of centralization, that is, of an organization. Any rational projection for building the iSt in Italy requires that you stay in Italy, preferably moving to the center (Torino) when that is possible (i.e., being alert for skilled jobs for which you are trained).

I have the distinct impression that there is something else behind your letter in addition to the points you raise. My general sense is that the letter is the result of a generalized dissatisfaction that things are not going as well as you think they might, that it will be a long haul just to get a functioning organization, etc. You appear to be motivated by a strong desire (in contradiction to the rest of your arguments) simply to get out of Italy, possibly back to England. But if you leave, the situation will not be better for the iSt; it will be worse, and in fact at present there are "concrete and realistic" possibilities to move forward in building an Italian section. One "hypothesis" is that this could take place through a clear and programmatically motivated split with the GBL.

One of the necessary elements in building and homogenizing the

iSt has been and will be the specific internationalization of cadre, that is, travel. It would certainly be useful for you simply to take a week at some point and spend time in, say, London for lengthy general political discussions. In addition to specific political questions, you need time simply to talk with comrades--for example, what is your job like, what are your relations with other workers, speculations on our development, various points in our past history, etc.

"On the Correct Handling
of Political Differences"

Behind much of this there is also, I think, a persistent problem concerning how we try to deal with political discussions, doubts, differences, which arises in particular in relation to the last paragraphs of your letter [see "Federico to IS," p. 28, this Bulletin]. It is only natural that comrades who come from other organizations have difficulty in imagining what a non-destructive discussion of political differences is or would be. Comrade Lafitte formulated this methodology, which is appropriate for surviving in the clique warfare of Pabloite organizations: "When you have a doubt, fight." But in a healthy Bolshevik organization, this method is purely obstructionist and destructive. However, there is another side to it as well, namely, that there is frequently an inability to understand fully that we make a distinction between specific political criticisms and a general assessment of a comrade. In this sense, while we have had a number of serious political criticisms, Fosco is absolutely correct in arguing that your presence in Italy was (and is) "very useful"--I would even say indispensable.

There are two central points to be made concerning your formulations. The first lies in the way you present the problem of "a discussion between the Nucleo (Fosco [my emphasis--J.S.] and the IS," and the "three possibilities" you say you have in that case. You present the problem as if you were an outside observer in limbo: neither in the purgatory of the Nucleo nor the heaven of the iSt. But this is fundamentally false. In fact, in any concrete example you do not have "three possibilities," you have one possibility, namely to defend the position which appears correct to you, or to say that you are uncertain (a possibility which, significantly, you do not mention). It is of course true that you may at a given time choose not to fight on a specific question, but this should be clearly differentiated from an abstract "choice" among possibilities. Your formulation could give the appearance that you are reduced to simple maneuvering.

This is closely linked with the second point that you raise, that that the "logical outcome" of the Milan meetings was for you to "conceal" your positions in order "to survive politically for a while." Our position was never that you should hide your positions, nor that you should maneuver (with the implication: behind Fosco's back). Rather, we argued that you should consult extensively with Fosco--that is, more than one would normally do after a working relation already existed, and that you should go slow about the way in which you raised differences, wrote letters to contacts, intervened against the GBL, etc. A point in passing: it was not the case that when you

"arrived in Italy [you were] bound to stay at home without making any political intervention." The result of the Milan meeting was that you should intervene actively against all OROs except the GBL. Later, on your objections, this was modified in the direction of increased intervention, after appropriate consultation with Fosco.

During the Milan meetings, when we seemed to have reached an impasse in the discussion of the CP, I pointed out to you that you did not have to respond in detail to the criticisms of your position; that you did not have to make a "self-criticism"; that there were difficult problems involved and you might like some time to think it over. It is perfectly reasonable to state that you were uncertain or wavering, that you were not yet convinced we were correct, but no longer wholly convinced of your own position, or what-ever corresponded to how you actually felt. To say this is not the same thing as to advance a criticism, drop it without saying anything (and without ceasing to believe one is correct), only to take it up again at some future point. This point relates directly to your observations concerning comrade Robertson's presentation: that within the context of "party patriotism," one has to know what is worth a discussion, a fight, a split. The point is not to conceal differences but to state clearly both your opinion, how important you think the differences are, and to what degree it has to be discussed at that time.

A related point is one which we have pointed to many times: the role of informal discussions. These play a crucial role for two central reasons. First, on questions where there is no disagreement, or where there are simply unclarities which can be cleared up fairly rapidly, informal discussions build up the trust and familiarity which is an essential ingredient to a solid working relationship. For example, the point you raise concerning "revolutionary optimism." I see no difference between the way we use this phrase and Gramsci's statement which you try to counterpose. This kind of point could and should be dealt with informally. The same is true for initial exploratory discussions concerning, for example, possible differences between Fosco and you even if they appear to be "both unclarified and immediately non-relevant." Thus, I have the feeling that you underestimate the political value of a summer camp such as this one (you stress its social nature), in particular the importance of informal discussions (if anything, there was too much formal programming and not enough "free" time).

And informal discussion is even more essential where there are more serious disagreements. Take the examples of the discussions with the TLD or OTR. Although the IEC meetings on the TLD were limited in time to about three hours, it was prepared and followed by perhaps ten hours of informal discussions--frequently rather heated arguments with the German leadership. Without those ten hours of discussion, the situation would not have come out as well as it did (even though all the problems were not definitely resolved--that would have been too much to expect). The same is true of the OTR: we spent substantial time discussing with them both before the meetings and afterwards. Part of the difficulties with the Nucleo is that for a variety of reasons we have not achieved this ratio of

three or four to one of informal to formal discussions.

This year, with the language problem largely resolved, it should be more possible to have such discussions and more fruitful for Alexandre to travel to Italy.

As I said, I think this exchange is basically a continuation of the April letters and that it is of general interest. The problems which have come up in Italy exist elsewhere as well. I am therefore circulating this exchange to Group I.

Comradely,

Sharpe

cc: I.S.
Fosco
Group I

REPORT ON ITALY

by Alexandre

Paris
21 September 1976I.S.
New York

re: Italy, etc.

Dear Comrades:

Fosco and Federico are hell bent on getting to Torino right away. They insist that the failure to establish the NSd'I in Italy soon will not be simply maintenance of the status quo, but will be a setback. To the degree that one can talk about a setback in relation to the minimal amount of work we have in Italy, I think that they are correct. It's not so much that we have definite prospects of breakthroughs in Torino; to the contrary, the GBL, for example, is leaving this city. What we have in Italy are two very driving and energetic political figures in Fosco and Federico and another year of spinning their wheels is likely to do funny things to them. They will either tear each other apart or spend the year concocting theories about the deviations of the iSt. Further, the anti-Spartacist League is taking shape in Italy (e.g., the recent GBL document on the iSt), and it would be nice to counter the polemics, lies and slanders that will be floating around the Italian left from some base other than the isolated Belluno.

However, this eagerness leads especially Fosco to underestimate what a strain it will be on Bart to be there alone and the political and organizational problems that could result from such a setup. So it turns out that Fosco's leaves from work are much more problematic than he originally indicated.... They agreed finally to a motion (reluctantly) which says that an absolute criterion for transferring Bart to Torino is the presence of Fosco for the bulk of the year; for Bart to go to Torino [temporarily...], and that in the interim they do more investigation into the leave possibilities so that at that time the decision can be based on at least a good probability that Fosco will have more than two months of leave. The problem is of course we won't know for sure about the leaves until he applies for them. He can take the first month immediately subsequent to the Christmas vacation, thus having six weeks off; then take the second one a couple weeks later. Federico thinks that he can also take some months off in the spring. This would not be a substitute for Fosco being there, but could be useful if Fosco could only get three or four months off between January and June. This would have to be weighed against the importance of Federico coming to the States on his vacation time next year.

I think that the other two alternatives outlined in Sharpe's letter of 29 August, Bart to Belluno or Genova for the next year, are both unviable. In Belluno, he would really go crazy. Bart in Genova would almost necessarily create too many exacerbations of the

tensions between Fosco and Federico. I think that if Bart does not go to Torino we have to at least seriously consider pulling him out of Italy.

...

However, the social and physical strains [on Bart] show and are somewhat the worse for his tendency to be Fosco's apologist on the question of Fosco abusing Bart. For example, the week before I got there, Bart had again slept on trains every night of the week. Fosco had insisted on a meeting in Genova before I got there, earlier in the week. As far as I can tell, the only point of the meeting was to make sure Bart and Federico were lined up on Torino before I got there. Bart mentioned in passing that he now keeps a bottle of whiskey with him, because sometimes he gets so overwhelmingly depressed that he needs to just sleep it off. I know, it's standard touring equipment for SL CCers on tour and organizers, but a bit much to expect of someone so young and inexperienced (and so hard on himself) on a regular basis. Also, Bart had not heard of Dave Reynolds' problems, and it came as something of a blow to him--both because he thinks a lot of Dave, but also, I thought, because the spectre of freaking out rather haunts him a bit. I insisted that he get to London, at least for a week, for a vacation and some socializing. (To London: besides getting good treatment, he may want to discuss his anxieties, complaints, etc. and at this point he probably would only discuss with David).

By the way, if we do establish Bart in Torino, at least through January correspondence with N.Y. and general liaison should still go through Fosco and Federico. Even once he gets an apartment and begins to set up an office, he shouldn't be the main liaison with N.Y.

Behind the discussions on Torino are some broader questions. To briefly summarize several discussions: Fosco would like to argue that after all the debate and discussion is over, the final decision about what to do with Bart and whether or not to go to Torino is the Italians'. He links this to his position that the sections should not be financially dependent on the iSt; that the IEC can veto political positions of sections but not organizational decisions; and implies that there is an element of blackmail involved in the ability of the iSt to finance the work of groups like the NSd'I.

On finances: after discussion, Fosco is willing to accept a pledge schedule. I brought a copy of the French system and he seemed to find it more detailed and useful than what they had as a proposal before. They will use it for general guidelines, and he accepts it "completely on a methodological plane." He also will accept money from the iSt. He stated however that there was some kind of common thread running through problems like the passivity of the LTF, the OTR and Peter which have to do with financing and organizational pressure applied by the iSt. He wouldn't be much more specific....

I am dubious about their plans for a monthly mimeoed pamphlet of reprints, both in terms of the return we get and the conception behind it. We cannot travel all over Italy indiscriminately. But they

want to publish the collected materials on the GBL and the Vietnam material that they already discussed with you. I suggested they go ahead with that and then re-evaluate it in a few months. There is also the factor that Fosco has to do something with his time, and I don't think we should intervene too much on such organizational questions. In any case, if this amount of money is not used on a steady flow of publications, probably something else will come up. They expect to take in themselves about \$60/month. This doesn't include the rent on an apartment in Torino. It also doesn't include the costs of hotels, etc. for monthly meetings, although if and when there is an apartment in Torino, this cost can be cut down.

...

Bart will be looking for a job in Torino--it's not too likely that he will find one. I think if there is work, he should take it. He will feel better if he's not supported by the iSt and it would be a large expense. However, it will have to be supervised. For example, it may turn out to be true that he can get a good part-time job once he knows Italian--in which case he should probably just study for a couple months and then get a job, instead of taking a job next month which precludes much study....

On the GBL: I believe they're writing you a letter outlining specific proposals--propose one more meeting, escalate our polemics in response to their document, etc. I want to note just a couple of things. Their response to the GBL seems to be somewhat too narrow, not enough in the international context of what this group means, somewhat Italian-centered and thus slightly flawed by their own frustration at not splitting the group or at least seeing it crumble before the feet of the NSd'I. Federico wanted to write a reply to their document called "Whither the GBL," somewhat grandiose, as Fosco pointed out. Fosco wanted to demand a public apology from them for their statement that our Mid-East position reflected "pressure from the Bronx" (that's really amusing, isn't it?). Samarakkody is becoming a real guru for the international anti-Spartacist League--the GBL now includes him in their list of orthodox groups whereas previously they made no mention of him. Also Mario and Merki here in Paris are raising echoes of his letters to the SL around the question of the OCI.

One last major point. It seems that there will be an internal debate among the Italian comrades on Posadaism. Julie submitted a letter of application with some weak formulations on her earlier history with Posadas--an intense debate ensued between Fosco and Federico. Fosco wanted, in the motion to accept her letter and invite her to meetings, include a statement that Posadaism was counterrevolutionary; Federico objected. Fosco seems to be concerned that the NSd'I is recruiting a bloc and wants to settle the question before Julie and Didi actually join. He is certain that Federico wrote Julie's letter of application. There is not a lot of evident personal tension between Federico and Fosco but Federico continues to feel misunderstood and wrongly polemicized against, as in Fosco's response to his letter to N.Y. By the way, it seems that Federico sent the letter to London Station believing that Jim was already

back in N.Y.--that is, he sent it to London not to Jim. The political debate will undoubtedly center on the Russian question and the CP in Italy. Such a debate is to be expected when trying to forge a Spartacist organization from an ex-Bordigist and an ex-Posadista, especially in a country with a strong CP. Also, re Federico's letter to N.Y.: when he talks about needing more perspectives documents in the 1st the one concrete thing he keeps returning to is more perspectives on the deformed workers states, more analysis of the post-WWII Stalinist bureaucracies, etc. I presume that means he has points to make himself which he feels we don't make. I believe I'll have to return to Italy for a weekend in October to make the final decision about Torino and at that time will take a closer look at their plans for internal discussion around this question.

Miscellaneous points: Fosco wants to hear about control commission proceedings. We went to Feltrinelli one day. I think Fosco would be happy to do whatever negotiations on exchange of material that we eventually decide on. They're reluctant to do abortion article for W&R--not a priority for them, etc. There's no reason it can't be done, however. Fosco was interested in discussing Cannon. Is there a tape of Jim's talk on Cannon at the 1974 summer camp? Given that so little Cannon is translated it might be useful to send me a copy of the tape here and it could be circulated some in Europe. Jim suggested that given the reference to Edmund in the GBL documents that it be translated and sent to him--I'll convey that to Fosco when I write to him about why we don't want to publish the GBL letter without our response.

I think that's it. This report is long, I think that reflects my previous feeling that the Italians were rather impenetrable. Italian society is odd--so many nuns and priests walking around as if they belonged in public made me edgy. What a beautiful city Genova is--everything suspended in this honeyed sunlight. But the remnants of feudalism are not just historical monuments--we walked through the semi-lumpen, semi-working-class slums. Many people live in buildings that are six centuries old--Federico says his family has had the same job for a long time--he means, not generations, but centuries. It quite jarred my American/immigrant sense of historical progress. A good place for a decadent vacation, but hard to imagine successful class struggle, in spite of the militancy of the Italian workers. Milan is more modern and seemed more accessible.

Comradely,

Alexandre

cc: London, files
copy to Fosco

[translation]

FOSCO TO I.S.

Belluno
15 October 1976

I.S.
New York

Dear Comrades,

I received a copy of Alexandre's report on Italy of 21 September 1976. To begin with, I write this after four attempts.

The report is much worse than I expected, overflowing with nonsense (especially about Italy) and inexact statements (about the situation in the Nucleo). Certainly Alexandre can make any asinine comments she wants to; as for me, I just note it and leave to the I.S. the responsibility of evaluating the danger of the situation in light of possible future developments.

However, it seems to me that before comrade Alexandre, an international leader of our movement, writes absurdities like "Fosco had insisted on a meeting in Genova before I got there, earlier in the week. As far as I can tell, the only point of the meeting was to make sure Bart and Federico were lined up on Torino before I got there," she would have better informed herself and have first asked Fosco (myself) for an explanation of this "criminal" initiative. If the comrade had been more accurate, she would have revealed that:

- 1) at the meeting of 14 September, the agenda--as I have it in my notes--was the following:
 - a) letter to GBL, that we dated 13 September, which we hurried to send before we received the document "First Balance Sheet...." This was the main topic of the meeting.
 - b) the end of the Muñoz campaign.
 - c) preparing the meeting with Alexandre (financial question, contacts, transfers). This point was changed to second on the agenda with the unanimous agreement of all comrades.
 - d) pamphlet on Vietnam.
 - e) Giulio's situation.

2) it seems to me quite natural to have taken up the Torino question with the comrades, given that my own position could not take theirs into account.

3) from her very report it turns out that Alexandre found that Federico and Bart fully agreed with the Torino plan. OK for Bart, by then considered as my ... plagiarizer (wouldn't it be time to stop resorting to this reactionary idiocy?), but how do you explain Federico's agreement?

This lightmindedness would be understandable in a simple militant, but it is intolerable in a European representative whose duty

it is to become informed before advancing far-out hypotheses.

But beyond the more or less inexact statements (on which I won't expand--Julie's letter, Bart, Alexandre's attitude during the discussion on Posadaism), what leaves me stupefied is the coarseness of political sensitivity. The way the comrade presents the Nucleo is grotesque ("What we have in Italy is two very driving and energetic political figures in Fosco and Federico and another year of spinning their wheels is likely to do funny things to them. They will either tear each other apart or spend the year concocting theories about the deviations of the iSt" [emphasis Fosco's]). At this level of political comprehension, discussion becomes useless, even tiresome, and threatens to reopen under dramatic circumstances the question of a political delegation of the iSt in Europe, which does not say anything at the level of our (huge) tasks, but would at least guarantee the minimum of political seriousness that is needed.

On a more general level, not only is it clear that we are not ready to construct the [International Trotskyist] League, but also that the iSt exists more on paper than in reality. What exists in reality is the SL/U.S.A. plus some "foreign" appendices and this is not yet the iSt (at a theoretical level this discrepancy is exemplified in the discrepancy which has come up between "The SWP and the Fourth International 1946-54" and the still-to-be-written document "Genesis and Role of Pabloism." At the European camp there were some serious contributions which moved in this direction, but apparently more on the basis of individual initiative than a real all-inclusive political mobilization of the organizations).

When comrade Robertson in his Compassionate Transfers draft writes:

"Since our exciting or even active participation in the class struggle has been, by and large, at a low ebb over the past year or two (i.e., the class struggle has been in most places where we are at a low ebb in that period), one is led to suspect that such personal search for sexual happiness has a more general social dimension,"

he is certainly on the right track provided that the correct relationship between "general social [and political] dimension" and "sexual happiness" (an important aspect, but certainly not the only one) is reestablished and it is decided to fight on a broad political front before it is too late and that one gives a clear political evaluation of rightist to these tendencies (or perhaps life is a dream and I am "connecting [sic] theories about the deviations of the iSt"?).

Due to its restricted nature, I am sending this letter only to the I.S. which can send it out and use it as it judges useful.

Fraternally,

Fosco

P.S.: If comrade Alexandre had the patience to glance at Marx's Capital (Book I, Chapter 24), she would find that Genova had completely emerged from feudalism, at least three centuries before that idiot Columbus discovered America. How is it possible for a revolutionary comrade of the American working class to confuse the painful misery of capitalist society with "remnants of Feudalism"?

SHARPE TO FOSCO

New York
24 October 1976

Dear Fosco,

As I am leaving for Europe tomorrow to deal with some aspects of the crisis deriving from Gerhard's defection, this letter is more hurried than I would like. (Also, I am writing at home without a copy of Alexandre's report.) First, I am convinced that your letter must be taken in the context of Gerhard's departure, as both are an expression of a conflict between "the Europeans" and "the Americans" which has been brewing for some time. Behind all the surface phenomena of culture, style, etc. (i.e., discussing politics during meals, shouting, drinking, sexual mores) there are two basic points of disagreement, and it is those that I wish to take up.

First there is the question of linguistic "style." You must realize that this works both ways. I find your style overly provocative: if your letter were written by an American we would conclude that the writer was consciously starting a faction fight. In other contexts, we generally find the French and Spanish wordy, vague and vacuous. However, behind this question there is a general "European" inability to recognize as political anything which is not presented in academic-intellectualized form. If I were to restate the sentence to which you seem most to object in a "European" idiom, you might disagree but you would not have the same reaction. Namely, you object to Alexandre's statement:

"What we have in Italy are two very driving and energetic political figures in Fosco and Federico and another year of spinning their wheels is likely to do funny things to them. They will tear each other apart or spend the year concocting theories about the deviations of the iSt."

"European" translation: "What we have in Italy are two very driving and energetic political figures in Fosco and Federico. The fact that there is no immediate outlet for this energy, due to their isolation (in the case of Fosco from a major city but also from each other) means that there are not sufficient outlets for their energy: this leads to frustration and a sense that they are not fulfilling the tasks which stand before them. A combination of personal frustration and isolation always brings with it the strong likelihood of finding a political expression. For example, Giulio's reversion to state capitalism probably comes largely from his situation and such a sense of frustration and isolation. Therefore, even in more mature political types such as Fosco and Federico we should be concerned about deviations (all the more since there are certain political differences or shades of differences which already exist). And deviations are never expressed as such, but by saying that the other person (in this case the iSt) has a deviation. The various difficulties in the U.S. (Douglas/trade union, marriage question, Black and the Gerhard incident are already indications that such a tendency exists even at the top levels of our tendency, and we should be alert

to it." That, roughly, is my "explication de texte" of that particular sentence in Alexandre's report.

There is also a general failure in Europe to understand the necessity and function of anecdotes and of the type of formulations expressed in Alexandre's letter. Reports are written from a distance, and therefore need to incorporate two factors. First is simply an analysis of what is going on--but second, and equally if not even more important, is a feeling, sense of the flavor of the situation. Impressionism, if you will, but a political impressionism based on a fine (i.e., delicate in opposition to "grossalanità") political sensitivity. Among the Europeans you in particular do not understand this because you do not understand (i.e., have not personally assimilated) the importance of the subjective factor in the day-to-day functioning of small political organisms, probably because you fundamentally deny its importance.

This leads to the second main area of disagreement, namely the correct method of building a leadership and the role of the I.S. rep. One of the essential functions of a political leadership, and in particular of an European rep is to be constantly on the lookout for differences. Now you know this in general since you constantly practice it--for example, vis-a-vis Federico. So why do you object when it is applied to you? Furthermore, this means that one (especially the European rep) must always operate with insufficient, partial data and yet nevertheless attempt to differentiate and to point to where the political and personnel problems are likely to arise six months or more from now. To paraphrase your letter, it is the duty of the European rep to formulate "far-out hypotheses" based on whatever information is available to her.

In this context you have things completely reversed: it is not simply Alexandre's "duty to become informed," it is your duty to give her a report on the previous meeting. If Alexandre was insufficiently informed in this situation (which is entirely possible and even likely), this means that you, as the politically responsible comrade in Italy, failed to make sure that she received adequate reports. You cannot evade your responsibility by trying to blame Alexandre. In addition, since in the past you have generally held back from attempting to integrate yourself into the international leadership (even taking linguistic problems into consideration), I believe that in fact you did not give Alexandre adequate reports.

It would appear that after having been told for over a year about the weaknesses of the iSt, you are finally convinced. But in a typical fashion (and not unlike Gerhard, although in the opposite direction: he withdraws and quits and you want to fight prematurely) you draw the extreme conclusion, namely that the iSt "exists more on paper than in reality." The I.S. cannot substitute itself for national leaderships, and national leaderships will not come to exist without the international's efforts. A political equivalent of "combined and uneven development" if you will. The struggle to build organizations is not simply the struggle to develop and extend our political line (as you would have it) but a struggle to build a

functioning political collective at a national level in various countries. Therefore an "all-inclusive political mobilization of the organizations" would be a sterile exercise without the other aspect of the political struggle.

A central aspect of this struggle is that all the leading comrades have realistic assessments of each other, and that these be completely open within the leadership. Thus as part of standard procedure we are of course sending your letter to Alexandre. Your letter highlights some of your central weaknesses, in my opinion. Namely that you feel that personal questions are (or ought to be) unimportant and as a corollary that you are unable to deal with people (i.e., you are not a politician in the best sense of the word). And secondly, that you are wooden and rigid and may not be able to change. One would have expected that you would be less ethno-centric and more open to non-Italian mores.

I believe that these are serious and deep-rooted problems: we have in fact been debating them at least since the exchange prior to the May meetings, and your letter (and this reply) has to be seen in the light of those exchanges. Alexandre's letter was only the spark which set off something more basic. If we cannot come to an agreement after a conclusive struggle on the question, it will undoubtedly, as you say, come up again, and "under [more] dramatic circumstances."

Finally, to take up briefly two specific points. It is clear that the tendency which has emerged in opposition to the "Compassionate Transfers" memo is in general a rightist (or more precisely, personalistic and life-style) one. Contrary to what you think, however (and this is illustrative of a difference concerning methods of building an organization and a leadership), the best way to fight on a "broad political front" is to fight around the specifics and to draw the lessons from them. Anything else would simply be an exercise in abstract Marxism and the specific applications would not be assimilated by the organization (i.e., it would not in fact be generalized and comrades would be unable to apply the lessons to other situations). Cf. Hegel and Lenin's Hegel notebooks on the subject of concrete and abstract.

Second, concerning Bart. Contrary to what you think, Alexandre's characterization is not insulting to Bart; it is a fact of life and completely normal. It is also part of your failure to understand that you must do more than "tell" Bart not to sleep on trains; for him to do it, you must order him not to.

Comradely,

Sharpe

Encl: translation of Fosco's letter

cc (with encl.): Alexandre
Robertson
Foster-Nelson
Logan

SHARPE TO FOSCO

New York
15 November 1976

Fosco,
Italy

Dear Comrade Fosco,

I wanted to put in writing what I take to be the central results of our meeting with you. If we agree on the facts of the matter, the political discussion will be more clear. After a year of attempting to reach agreement on specific examples or aspects of the organizational question, one at a time, I now believe that we have a generalized difference on the organization question. This emerged in a series of specific questions in our meeting, seen in the light of our experience of the past year. The overall framework in which you tend to view these questions implies, in my opinion, a factional logic.

The first central point which came up in our meeting (and which was discussed at some length at the I.S. meeting yesterday) is the Bart/London question. Even the existence of this question is linked to a series of mistakes ever since he arrived in Italy. The first mistake concerned.... As we pointed out at the meeting, from the beginning you aggravated the problems which arose by not discussing them frankly. Without full and frank discussion and speculation at all times such problems are bound to be posed in a more destructive way (or, as you said, "under dramatic circumstances").

Now although you retreated when pressed on the Bart question, you also initially had the attitude that you were indeed a separate entity, "negotiating" with the I.S. This has been a recurrent theme ever since last year, concretized in the exchanges around the May meeting. It is no accident that it took two evenings of frequently hostile discussion to reach a "convergence" of views (at least on operational conclusions: it is still unclear to me whether you agree with our assessment of Bart), nor that Alexandre and Lesueur got the impression that you wanted to place conditions on the I.S. before accepting Bart's transfer to London, but that you were prepared to agree to a "compromise" with the I.S. You continue to present a closed front to the I.S.--a tendency which again emerged in the discussion of who was responsible for the fact that Bart did not stay in London for Jim's meeting.

This point, like the others below, indicates that while you have some organizational conceptions inherited from the Bordigists (e.g., opposition to obligatory pledges), others come directly from federated Pabloite positions. You will no doubt object that federalism is not one of your weaknesses, and this is true: but the fact remains that the conceptions you advanced in our meeting shared a methodology with Pabloite practice.

At the I.S. meeting yesterday, the IEC comrades felt that we had not pushed hard enough for consolidation of the Nucleus in one city

and had been slow to realize the implication (possible dissolution of the Nucleus) of failing to centralize.

For some time, the I.S. has acquiesced to a series of proposals related to transfers and job situations when perhaps we should not have. For example, we acquiesced to allowing Federico to take his present job even though we felt he should be able to get a job with little difficulty, given his skills, and that he should spend some time in the U.S. Most recently, when you did not get a transfer to Torino, we did not seriously investigate the possibility of extended leaves (with, of course, financial support from the I.S.), or other possibilities so that Ga could accept her transfer and we could consolidate immediately. And if nothing was possible, we should have at least raised and discussed the possibility of your giving up your job (which is not to say that that would have been the appropriate course, simply that it should have been raised).

A similar situation is posed in the question of Federico at the present time. It is entirely possible that the best course would be --if he takes a leave now and cannot get another one in the spring-- to quit his job in the spring, come to the U.S., and then have a specific period of time to find a job in Milan or Torino (say, three months). What is certain is that if we do not drive forward the centralization of the Nucleo into one city and the comrades' transformation into professional revolutionaries, we will not succeed in building a section in Italy. Thus, while the IEC comrades agreed with all the operational conclusions of the motion we drew up with you, namely,

"The perspective of immediate concentration of the NSd'I in Torino, discussed at the summer camp, cannot now be realized due to objective circumstances, and renting an apartment in Torino must be postponed until about May 1. In the meantime, comrade Bart will be transferred to Station London with the perspective that he will return to Italy. While in London he should take an Italian course and take any other steps necessary for his return. During this period copies of correspondence concerning Italy will be sent to the Station London leadership so that comrade Bart can be kept informed of the political situation and developments. It would be desirable for the comrade to attend particularly important meetings of the Nucleo during this time if possible,"

there were differences concerning the motivation. After discussion, the I.S. unanimously voted the following motion:

"The I.S. accepts the operational conclusions of the above motion while noting that the I.S.'s acquiescence to the Italian comrades' obsessive concern with their job security has led to a situation in which the lack of concentration calls into question the very existence of the Nucleo."

The three other important points which came up with you all revolved around the political logic of a tendency. I believe that assuming your differences are not resolved--and after a year of dis-

cussion, that does not seem to be an immediate likelihood--the political logic of the situation leads to the question of your forming a tendency (independently of whether you actually do so).

Around the resignation of Gerhard, you raised two questions: first, that you wanted to write to him, and said that a "European" should have been included in the delegation (Jim and Alexandre) which visited him in mid-October. We argued against both these positions, pointing out that your stated intent in writing to Gerhard, namely, to try to make him take a position (i.e., fight), would in fact serve no purpose and might be counter-productive. We did not want to put further pressure on him, as we felt it would result in increasing the probability he would become hostile. We also argued that Jim and Alexandre were in fact the best delegation to send to see Gerhard and that you or Lesueur (the available "Europeans") would not have added anything significant. Now you did not make any political arguments to counter ours, but neither did you give up your positions. This leads us necessarily to the conclusion that you had some reason which you were not stating. And in fact an alternate motivation was rather blatantly apparent in the way you presented these questions: that you were not sure that what we said was really true and wanted to "see for yourself" and possibly to attempt to make a bloc with Gerhard on the basis of suspicions/criticisms of the I.S. In the second case, if you do not argue that an expanded delegation would have been more effective if you or Lesueur had been present, the only obvious conclusion is that it would have been a concession to Gerhard's criticisms of Jim or that a "European" was needed to check up on the IEC comrades. But such a "concession" would in fact have only strengthened his lack of respect for the I.S. leadership and in fact have decreased whatever slight possibility for clarification did exist. So in both cases, we are left with the conclusion that you simply wanted to "check up on" the I.S./IEC, even though you denied this at the meeting.

Another heated discussion arose when you raised the question of factional rights internationally in the ISt, and in particular the financing of tendencies or factions within the organization. When we explained that within the U.S. tendencies were expected to finance their activity in addition to financial support to the organization as a whole, but that we recognized serious problems with this solution internationally, you said that the American solution was the equivalent of abolishing factional rights, much as Livio Maitan did in Italy! Further, the solution you proposed instead, namely that members of oppositional tendencies not pay pledges to the organization, but rather only some minimal token amount to the organization, and the rest to the tendency, is pure organizational Menshevism directly in line with the Menshevik position of 1903. While you subsequently stated that you "only" meant that it was an "important question," how are we to account for the fact that your proposal was not simply one with certain difficulties (which, given the complexity of the problem, would be inevitable), but a purely Menshevik one modelled--as you said in presenting it--completely on USec practices.

Finally, I found your intervention in the OTR discussion very disturbing in all respects. In the discussion with you the previous

evening, Alexandre and I had insisted at length on the need for informal discussions, openness, etc., and you had responded to a limited degree on the question of Bart. We were having an essentially identical discussion with the OTR, so I passed you a note inviting you to make any comments you might have. Your intervention consisted first in a comparison between the situation within the OTR (pro-iSt and anti-iSt groupings) and the situation in the Italian Socialist Party in 1921-22 and the fight over affiliation to the Comintern. Secondly, your conclusion was that just as a faction fight had to be waged then, so a faction fight had to be waged now within the OTR, and that the fact that there was no hardened pro-iSt faction showed either internal political weaknesses in the pro-iSt wing of the OTR or an incorrect refusal of the iSt to build a faction in the OTR.

In my opinion, your intervention showed two things. First, that you had no understanding either of the process which is taking place within the OTR, or of the way in which one deals with other organizations one is trying to recruit. As Alexandre and I pointed out to you later, we want, if possible, for F. to take the leadership of the pro-iSt grouping in the OTR, and we are pushing for political clarification in that context. You confuse a perspective which is correct only "in the last analysis" (and which ignores the qualitative difference between a mass party and a half-dozen comrades!) with an immediate perspective.

Secondly, you were manifestly unwilling to collaborate with the I.S. in the discussion, i.e., to address the issues under discussion, but rather attempted to bring up an entirely different political line. As far as I can see, this simply represents your continued refusal to make any effort to become part of a collective leadership of the iSt.

Comradely greetings,

Sharpe

P.S. After having written to Federico, and this letter, I will try to write on some separate points (including the October Il Militante) in the next few days.

cc: Alexandre
LTF
London
Federico

REPORT ON ITALY

by Sharpe

New York
10-16 November 1976

Group II

Dear Comrades,

I have just come back from Europe and wanted to make a brief report on the state of things and the concrete steps we have in mind in a series of situations.

...

Italy. There have recently been some heated exchanges with comrade Fosco, and we had some meetings with comrade Fosco. It now appears that the comrade has a generalized difference on the organization question. Further, with the inability to concentrate our forces, and with the various problems concerning Bart (who has to spend some time in London), the situation in Italy is extremely precarious and the Nucleo could disintegrate totally. On the one hand comrade Federico has been feeling extremely isolated and has certain political weaknesses (centering on the question of Stalinism), so that we are hoping that it will be possible for him to spend a week or so in London and about six weeks in the U.S. in the relatively near future. On the other hand, Fosco has differences on the organization question and has been increasingly suspicious of virtually everything the I.S. does. So unless one or both of them make a qualitative leap, we are in bad shape in the next immediate period, even though our prospects are good in the long run.

On the main specific point at issue, we reached a tactical agreement and Alexandre, Fosco and I drafted the following motion:

"The perspective of immediate concentration of the NSd'I in Torino, discussed at the summer camp, cannot now be realized due to objective circumstances, and renting an apartment in Torino must be postponed until about May 1. In the meantime, comrade Bart will be transferred to Station London with the perspective that he will return to Italy. While in London he should take an Italian course and take any other steps necessary for his return. During this period copies of correspondence concerning Italy will be sent to the Station London leadership so that comrade Bart can be kept informed of the political situation and developments. It would be desirable for the comrade to attend particular important meetings of the Nucleo during this time if possible."

During the IS meeting of 14 October this motion was discussed, and the following motion passed in reference to it:

"The IS accepts the operational conclusions of the above motion, while noting that the IS's acquiescence to the Italian comrades' obsessive concern with their job security has led to a situation in which the lack of concentration calls into question the very existence of the Nucleo."

...

Comradely greetings,

Sharpe

GBL TO WV AND I.S.

Milan, November 6th, 1976

Editorial Board, Workers Vanguard
(and national sections or sympathizing
groups of the iSt)

Dear Comrades,

To our great disappointment, we notice your failure to publish in WV our letter for explanation and political reply to the assumptions you made in the issue No. 113 about GBL electoral position.

According to our previous declaration (see also our document "A First Balance Sheet..." of August 22, 1976) we feel it was seriously incorrect not to publish our letter immediately, under the pretext of finding time for writing a reply. If you, indeed, were not able to promptly write such a reply, you could and ought [to] publish our letter, reserving the right of making further comments in subsequent issues. However, we fraternally agreed to give you the time for preparing a reply; in fact, we were told it has been written.

Initially, you raised some objections regarding the length of your prepared reply--which, of course, did not change the terms of the problem as for the necessity of publishing our own letter. Subsequently, you let us know, through the Spartacist Group [sic] of Italy, that our letter, together with an abstract of your reply, had to be published in the issue No. 124--but actually such publication did not take place.

Following our remonstrances (by phone), the representative of the Spartacist Nucleus of Italy, Com. Fosco, contacted Com. J. Sharpe, who told him that our letter would not be published until issue No. 126--but would certainly appear "in one of the following issues" (as Com. Fosco reported).

Now, you have received issue No. 131--and our letter, after more than three months, is still awaiting publication!

We intend not to be mocked. We feel it is clear that you have seriously transgressed one of the basic rules of proletarian democracy. We therefore invite you to palliate such an unbearable breach of a correct political praxis, by publishing our letter as soon as possible.

If the same letter doesn't appear within issue No. 136, we will think you definitely refuse to publish it, and will, therefore, make this affair public within the range of organizations we consider "orthodox Trotskyist." So, we will report the affair in our bulletin, and will send copies of our letter and related correspondence, with any necessary explanation, to all local groups of Spartacist organizations, as well as to Revolutionary Workers Party/Sri Lanka and Trotskyist Organizing Committee, requesting them to publish these documents in their press.

With Bolshevik greetings,

Fernando
on behalf of the Executive
Committee, Bolshevik-Lenin-
ist Group of Italy

SHARPE TO GBL

international
Spartacist
tendency

Box 1377, G.P.O.
New York, N.Y. 10001
212-966-3797

30 November 1976

Gruppo Bolscevico-Leninista
Genova,
Milan

Dear Comrades,

Your letter of 6 November raises one central complaint: that a Trotskyist organization supposedly has a "responsibility" to publish documents of other tendencies in its public press, even without replying to them, and that not to do so at the request of another tendency means "seriously transgress[ing] one of the basic rules of proletarian democracy."

This is a purely Menshevik position, shared today by the likes of the OCI, which entitles its central paper Informations Ouvrières, Tribune libre de la lutte des classes. But a Bolshevik party is not a "Tribune Libre," it is the combat organization of the proletariat, and its press is one of its main weapons in organizing the working class. Not only is a Trotskyist organization not under any obligation to publish documents of centrist organizations in its press without replying; it would in fact be totally irresponsible to do so without an appropriate reply. To publish centrist documents without replying would mean disorienting and disorganizing the working class. The logical consequence of such a position is the dissolution of the Bolshevik party into the less advanced layers of the class, if not into some Pabloite-inspired "new mass vanguard" or a "unity of revolutionaries" à la Lutte Ouvrière.

A typical application of this type of position was the proposal by Lutte Ouvrière after May '68 to edit a common paper with the United Secretariat and other centrists in France. The USec has recently taken up this proposal, offering, in a letter of 14 November to LO, to have the LCR co-edit a four-page weekly supplement with Lutte Ouvrière and/or to allow LO to publish an article in every fourth issue of Inprecor. Is this your idea of a correct practice for a Trotskyist organization?

In your opinion, should Lenin have opened the pages of Against the Stream to letters, without a reply, from those who opposed the Zimmerwaldians as "sectarian," from those who opposed the policies of the SPD but did not want to break from it? We view your proposal in a similar light.

However, it goes without saying that Bolsheviks attempt to take up and debate the burning issues of the day, and to the extent that a debate with centrist currents is useful in the political task of decisively defeating centrist positions (such as the ones you hold on the national question and the popular front) and influence among advanced layers of the working class, it is in the interest of the Bolshevik party, in the context of its overall political priorities, to publish letters such as yours, with a reply, in order to further this task.

We believe that the question of the popular front is indeed a burning issue today and intend to produce a general reply to the specific points you raise, for publication together with your letter, on a timetable in accordance with our overall political priorities.

As I write this letter, issue No. 136 of Workers Vanguard is in production. It contains articles on the SWP's election campaign, Poland, Ethiopia and an article by Comrade Samarakkody on Ceylon.

Trotskyist greetings,

John Sharpe,
for the Editorial Board
of Workers Vanguard

[translation]

FOSCO TO I.S.

Belluno
4 December 1976

Sharpe--New York
Alexandre--LTF
Federico

Dear Comrades,

The letter of 15 November and the circular of 10-16 [November] speak openly of consolidation of differences between the I.S. and myself as the balance sheet of our recent meeting. In addition, the gaps in Sharpe's letter confirm the non-superficial character of the differences. The main questions "neglected" in the letter are:

1) In our meeting there were three episodes under debate: Alexandre's report on Italy (plus my answer plus Sharpe's reply); the charges--slanderous in some respects and which, if confirmed, would have entailed adopting measures against me--[made] by J.R. to a London meeting in the presence of the comrades of the Station and comrade Bart of the NSd'I; and the Gerhard question in Germany.

Comrade Sharpe passes over in silence the second question (methods and contents of J.R.'s charges).

I want immediately to clarify that I have nothing against the fact that comrade J.R. felt the need to intervene concerning the situation of the Italian section, on the contrary, I am thankful to him for this attention. What I object to is the manner and type of political arguments (or at least of those that could be taken as such) which were wholly insufficient and, it seems to me, misleading, in terms of resolving the extremely serious problems which the Nucleo must confront.

2) I in turn have made three requests of the I.S.: comrade Sharpe notes the first, namely, my request for a precise and complete international regulation concerning factional rights. The model I brought up at the Italy meeting was the one which had always been proposed in the FMR, which does in fact have extremely serious political deformations; however, it is also serious to leave the question without a reply.

Of the two other requests, the first is politically important and consists in reorienting our internal and external press by bringing out English Spartacist again and by communicating more rapidly the analyses and debates of the various sections of the ISt. I have no difficulty in admitting that the information [sent] by the I.S. to the Nucleo leadership is better by far, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in relation to my April criticisms--even though that does not ignore the fact that I was never able to see Black's reports on Italy--which probably influenced the harshness of my reaction to Alexandre's report--and that the very first report about Gerhard's

situation (circular of 18 October) was sent to me only when the question was practically settled, whereas it seems to me (Bart's report of the London meeting) that the "question" was opened at least six months ago! I note in passing that Alexandre never made any allusions to Gerhard in her reports on the TLD at the September meeting in Genova; on the contrary, the other comrades and I thought we understood that somehow or other the German section would be given something like a leading role in Europe.

The third point, politically less essential, nonetheless reveals its importance in terms of comrades' reciprocal respect and personal integration, and consists in a more rigorous formulation of certain aspects of organizational life (ending the fairly widespread custom of leading comrades sleeping during meetings, prohibiting the consumption of alcohol during meetings, etc.).

The fact that the prohibition of vodka--in terms of its "historical significance" [in English in the original] in Russian society was made possible only with the working class' conquest of power (cf. Trotsky, "Vodka, the Church and the Cinema" in Problems of Everyday Life) certainly rules out a "bloc" with moralistic and reactionary sectors of the bourgeoisie in the midst of capitalist society, but this does not constitute a reason for giving up the struggle to banish certain habits from the functioning of our organization.

Other questions:

In Belluno, comrade Federico told me that he had exchanged letters with David (I have only Federico's reply). With a letter there was supposed to be the text of J.R.'s presentation on Cannon. I will examine this text, which I have also requested several times, attentively. However, I can already say that I think Federico's assertion (letter to David of 17 November) in which it seems that we fully lay claim to Cannon, to the point of defining ourselves as "Cannonites," does not convince me. I continue to call myself simply a Trotskyist.

With reference to your observations on the Nucleo (motions and other measures), the provisional leadership of the Nucleo met in Belluno to examine them on 23 November. There was common confusion about the second motion and about the passage in the circular "So unless one or both of them make a qualitative (!) leap, we are in bad shape in the next immediate period, even though our prospects are good in the long run (!!)" (My underlining--Fosco).

Taking into account your recent intervention into the Italian situation (J.R. in London and the article "Revolt in Italian Communist Party" in WV No. 131), I think that the time for an overall balance sheet of our activity in Italy and the prospects that are opening up (or closing down) is approaching.

Saturday 20 November I met Grisolia and others from the GBL at the Torino train station (I was in Torino to put French Spartacist No. 12 into bookstores, while the GBL had met at the station to go to the national convention of Lotta Comunista). The confrontation was sharp, but without breaking off [with them]. I then read the

article "The crisis of the Trotskyist movement in Italy" (Il Militante, October 1976). I think that we need to pose concretely the goal of re-establishing meetings with the GBL, after settling the question of the reply to their letter by our public reply and after having defined in a meeting with you the goals that we set ourselves.*

To conclude I think that the questions under discussion touch on a broad field, whose breadth and depth can be measured only with time. Personally I judge it irresponsible, faced with the international situation of the workers movement, to arrive at splits which do not contain an element of general political clarification. This is why I cannot go the same way as comrade Gerhard, to whom I did not write after learning on the last day of the meeting that he had resigned and not taken the four-month leave of absence. I also think that the I.S. will not resort to ultimatic attitudes, which would probably have serious political consequences. In the circular of 10-16 November, my comrade and friend Sharpe consigns me--it would appear--to the circle of the damned: "Fosco has differences on the organization question and has been increasingly suspicious of virtually everything the I.S. does" (my emphasis--Fosco).

I firmly reject this manner of presenting my criticisms. In 15 years of political activity in the ranks of the organized workers movement, I have never determined my activity according to personalistic attitudes, neither paranoid nor sado-masochistic. I did not fail to appreciate the actions of the I.S. when they were correct: loyal support in the confrontation with other groups in Italy, political confidence expressed in numerous letters of comrade Sharpe and in the request to take part in the International Control Commission on the L-Y case, etc.

Certainly I have also made mistakes: for example, in the recent polemic with the European representative of the iSt, my attack in certain passages involved the comrade personally; today I apologize to her. But my polemic has always been open, concrete, and contained. Therefore, I cannot but protest that in an international information circular you put everything into the same bag.

As far as I am concerned, just as I have not put forth conditions, but simply requests, [so] I will subordinate myself to the discipline of the organization, until such time as differences touch on programmatic questions. Until that time, my goal remains that of working for a strengthening of the iSt.

I request that the present letter be published in an international internal bulletin. Fraternal greetings,

Fosco
Belluno, 4 December 1976

* The GBL question, which arose only as a reflection of the casual, but nonetheless strained, meeting in Torino, emerges here only as a possible difference: both the Nucleo as well as the I.S. should really again state what we intend to do. This is directly related to the "perspectives which are opening up (or closing down)."

[translation]

FOSCO TO I.S.

[Belluno
5 December 1976]

Sharpe--New York
Alexandre--LTF
Federico

Dear Comrades,

Some other points to be added to the letter of 4 December:

1) We are still waiting for Sharpe's brief answer to Giulio (cf. Sharpe's letter of 12 October). The comrade called me once to solicit an answer, according to which "I have to make my decision" (Giulio's words). During this entire period the comrade has never requested our press, nor any information concerning the comrades. As for me, I do not see the absolute need to answer: the letter and the subsequent behavior leave no doubt concerning the break which has taken place. However, the I.S. decides.

2) Diddi has resigned from candidacy, to withdraw into the equivocal role of sympathizer. Federico has already sent his letter of "resignation." We have asked for a meeting with him, but so far there is no answer.

It is obvious that his crisis is included in the general difficulties of the Nucleus. More specifically, after returning from our meeting, I immediately proposed to the comrades a meeting of the Nucleus, which could not be held because Federico was busy moving and because Diddi said he could not get free from work on that Saturday-Sunday. Thus his only trip to Belluno was put off again, because he again did not manage to get free on Saturday. On the other hand, meetings cannot be held in his house near (so to speak) Florence because of the presence of his "employers."

3) Concerning the Vietnam pamphlet. I gave Federico the electric typewriter. Federico will send you the complete list of translations from WV (or other iSt press) which will be included in the pamphlet.

4) Saturday 20 November I brought French Spartacist No. 12 (which gave the old address for the Italian Nucleus--now the Bordighists' office) to one bookstore in Torino and to two in Milano. Federico took on the job for Rome (together with a possible meeting in Taranto).

5) Friday 3 December I met Federico in his new apartment. In the evening I had an appointment with the Secretary of my union, in Torino, from whom I should get full support for the transfer to Torino (indeed the publication of the ministerial circular concerning transfers is imminent).

6) During the course of the meeting with Federico we formulated a rough agenda for the meeting with Alexandre in mid-December (please confirm the comrade's arrival):

- a) international situation of the iSt
- b) Italian situation--state of the Nucleus
- c) GBL
- d) Spartacist Bulletin
- e) pamphlets
- f) various (list of publications, etc.)

Some more information about the meeting with the GBL:

I already said how it happened. After I brought the material to the bookstore, I phoned--as had been agreed--Grisolia's house. The GBL had already come back from the Lotta Comunista convention, since the marshals had prevented them from selling their propaganda material. For the GBL Grisolia and Marco participated in the meeting at the Torino station. Their polemic was directed both at the iSt and the Nucleus. Vis-à-vis the iSt Grisolia complained about the lack of reply from WV (in the same terms contained in the GBL letter of 6 November) and the cancellation of the meeting which had been agreed to with Sharpe. Vis-à-vis the Nucleus they attributed to me in particular a tendency to put the GBL in a bad light to the I.S. and to Federico the fact that he couldn't be located and that he didn't tell me about GBL initiatives. Grisolia said that the GBL had phoned Federico "6-7 times": at the last meeting Federico said his mother had told him of one call, but he hadn't thought it was important. I, however, didn't know anything about it. For my part I replied stressing the formalism of the GBL's attitude on the question of the reply by WV. I said that the questions raised by the GBL (letter to WV and the "First Balance Sheet...") entailed a broader answer, that it involved other groups with which they have noted their points of agreement and that that required more work in replying.

As far as the Nucleus was concerned, I said that between me and the iSt there were no differences about relations with the GBL, while for the Federico question I said that I would ask the comrade, but that in any case that was no justification for the fact that over the entire summer the GBL had not sent its material to Belluno. Even the latest issue of Il Militante, which came out at least a month ago, was only given to me at this time, casually, in short. Grisolia took on the job of sending copies of their material special delivery (we shall see!). With respect to the Nucleus' letter to the GBL concerning the open letter to Lotta Continua, Grisolia said that the first version [i.e., the published version we have--ed.] of the letter was approximate, that they had written another one, of which he will send me a copy, with some changes: for example, they would no longer call for forming a tendency in Lotta Continua, but rather for breaking.

I further attacked the GBL for their abstentionism on the Muñoz campaign. Grisolia replied indignantly, boasting of having gotten the signature of the Consiglio di Fabbrica (Factory Council) of Carlo

Erba (the Milan firm near which Fernando works); further he accused me of ignoring the GBL's report to the PDC (which in fact I have never seen, as it was never sent to me). I replied that in any case it was a minor point and that the fact that the GBL sent its own report to the PDC without sending a copy to the Italian Committee to Save Mario Muñoz was a further proof of their policy of boycotting the Nucleus. My conclusions are those contained in the letter of 4 December. I think it would be appropriate to begin a general discussion on relations with the GBL, insofar as these are now at a critical point and it is impossible to maintain the status quo until June (my presumed date of arrival in Torino).

I am sending separately GBL leaflets and the latest copy of "Avanzata Proletaria," organ of the Lega Socialista Rivoluzionaria (pro-PST). Concerning the Lega, cf. the outline in Il Militante.

Fraternal greetings,

Fosco
Belluno
5 December 1976

SHARPE TO FOSCO

New York
20 December 1976

NSd'I

Dear Comrade Fosco,

It seems to me that the central point raised in your letters of 4 and 5 December is not the specific questions that were at issue at the meeting (or otherwise), but your objection both to our insistence on making general, tentative, political projections of the future of the comrades now in the Nucleus, and the specific characterization that Fosco in particular is "increasingly suspicious of virtually everything the IS does." You protest against this, claiming first that it ascribes "personalistic attitudes"--i.e., subjectivism--to you and that your criticisms have always been "open, concrete and limited [delimitata:contained]."

But your self-characterization is not adequate. Your letter is part of a pattern which has existed from the beginning--of a very sharp initial reaction on some specific point (e.g., factional rights in this case), followed by a retreat to a "limited" and "concrete" criticism. But since your initial criticisms have generally not been limited and since your subsequent "limited" points have a persistence not generally associated with minor criticisms, your characterization is open to considerable doubt. Thus your statement (later retracted) that our practice in the U.S. concerning financing of factions was "as bad as Livio Maitan's" is not a limited statement, but a generalized accusation of bureaucratism.

The same is true of your views on the Gerhard question (which I notice you did not take up in your letter). Based on the way you again raised this question in your letter of 4 December, if I were sure of questions of tone and style (which I am not), I would conclude that you believe we have been consciously hiding information from you, i.e., that you are accusing us of being devious, maneuverist, bureaucratic cliquists who protect Anglo-Saxons and attack Latins. You complain that the Gerhard question had been posed for some time before you first heard of it (i.e., that we had been hiding it from you). But the "Gerhard question" had existed only in the sense that he was obviously a rather rigid personality who for some reason refused to fight for his positions and vacillated on the crucial question of liquidating Vienna/Köln (concerning which you received the same information as other IEC members outside New York), and who periodically got very depressed and complained that he did not have the qualities to be the national chairman of the TLD. You were in fact present at the major confrontations: in November 1975 over the question of "rebirth" (Wiedergeburt/Wiederaufbau) of the Fourth International, the May meetings and the summer camp, so you had essentially the same information we had. We were always aware that Gerhard was very brittle, but what would you propose doing? Clearly it would not have served any purpose to broadcast to the world: "Gerhard is very brittle and may not make it as TLD national chairman." And, having no replacement, we had to attempt to work with what we had.

You seem to want to have it both ways: on the one hand, you object to "speculation" concerning yourself and the future of the Nucleus and to hypotheses based on scanty information; on the other hand, when something does happen, you complain that we did not jump to conclusions in the case of Gerhard.

This leads me to the second point, the question of "openness." You say that your criticisms have always been open, and this is true, as far as it goes. However, you have not been open--as Alexandre and I pointed out at length to you à propos of Bart--concerning collaboration. In the past, I have repeatedly complained to you that you do not attempt to integrate yourself into the leadership of the tendency, in particular at international gatherings, but rather have remained closed and isolated. This is a large part of the reason why you have not gotten very much from such gatherings and not been particularly aware of central problems which were being discussed informally (this is not simply a language problem).

Thus, you have indeed openly criticized, but not collaborated openly. And even your criticisms remain frequently opaque or obviously incomplete. You advance a general criticism, then retreat to a "limited" one, which you then let drop without, however, saying whether you are persuaded, whether you feel it is not important at the moment, without stating "openly" exactly where you stand. One frequently gets the impression that in fact you still hold your original criticism, but for tactical reasons don't want to state it. This is not an "open" manner of proceeding.

Let me use the example of the press and English Spartacist. You have a limited criticism: you think English Spartacist ought to appear more often. Fine. So does everyone. However, as we have pointed out before, to make this an absolute priority would have meant a total reorientation of our press policy, in particular, might well mean making WV a bi-weekly instead of a weekly (or even never having gone weekly at all--a "solution" you raised at the 1975 SL/U.S. summer camp). But you have not taken responsibility for drawing that conclusion: you say simply that it is "politically important" to "reorient our internal and external press by bringing out English Spartacist again and by communicating more rapidly the analyses and debates of the various sections of the ISt." But to do this means that Gordon and Norden need more time to work on Spartacist and directly on the I.S., and that in turn would bring up the question of WV going back to bi-weekly. In addition, bringing out English Spartacist on the scale you have in mind would probably mean restricting our French and German publications (since crucial time for translations and circulation of material would be taken away from them). It would be politically responsible to make such a proposal, irrespective of whether we should adopt it or not. If a leader of our tendency feels that our priorities are incorrect, even in part, he has a responsibility to argue to correct them. But you make a "limited" criticism which in fact is irresponsible: simply that we do more, i.e., that everyone work harder.

Now in fact, we are bringing out an English Spartacist in January, and now plan to bring it out quarterly. We have "reoriented"

in two ways to enable us to do this. First, Spartacist will now consist mainly of documents which either cannot be edited or need only a small introduction. In this way we hope to remove the central block in the path of Spartacist, that of a lack of editorial capacity. Second, we are making comrade O'Brien managing editor of Spartacist, that is, we are sabotaging the youth press. If this arrangement works out, the youth will simply have to find another editor (it amounts to sabotage because at the present time there does not appear to be any other available comrade capable of editing the youth press).

Another example of an "open" and "limited" criticism which is deceptive is your complaint concerning sleeping and drinking in meetings. At first we discussed this as if it were in fact an "open and limited" point, and Alexandre and I pointed out to you that in particular at international gatherings, comrades were seriously overworked and therefore they sometimes slept through points that they were less personally involved in, but that they were always awake when there was a political fight to be made. Your reply was that in that case we should not work so hard: but in fact this would mean less of everything you want more of! But the central point is that building a Bolshevik organization is an exhausting task and is not and cannot take place at a leisurely 9-to-5 pace. At our current stage of weakness we have no other choice.

How, then, are we to understand your insistence on this question? There seem to me two possibilities: either it is an example of undisguised moralism, in which any departure from what, in the context of the TLD, I have termed the "Prusso-Platonist" model of the perfect revolutionist, is to be condemned (Crawford terms the same phenomenon "the German disease"). Or is it a barely disguised attack on comrade Robertson in particular (who, as I am sure you recall, slept not only during a large part of the Italy point in the May meetings, but a large part of the German point as well), in short, a personal reaction in political disguise?

"Concentration by Stages"

The second major point in your letter is the statement that our differences are "non-superficial" and that they "touch on a broad field, whose breadth and depth can be measured only with time." A year and a half ago, this was also our position. At that time (summer of 1975), we felt that it was inevitable, given your background, that not only would there be many differences, but that after 15 years' experience in bureaucratic organizations you would naturally be extremely sensitive, and consequently suspicious of the leadership. But we also felt that this could be worked out. However, this has not been the case (to the best of my recollection, the only such difference which has been resolved is the question of obligatory pledges, and I am not even positive about that). For us, concentration of the Nucleus, that is, establishing an organizational framework in which actual ongoing political work takes place, is a pre-condition for working out our differences (but centralization by itself is no panacea and does not guarantee their successful resolution). It is indicative that things are now going better with the LTF in part because they are undertaking regular and sustained political work.

In the absence of such concentration, the problems which have already existed--demoralization, sense of isolation, no milieu in which to measure our program against reality and the ensuing political deviations--will only get worse. Not only do we have the experience of Pino and Giulio, and now Diddi, but I understand that at the meeting with Alexandre and Lesueur last weekend, you characterized the GBL as revolutionary, not centrist!

The problem of concentration is linked to the I.S. motion which you find confusing. The motion represents a self-criticism by the I.S. namely that we did not push hard enough on the question of centralization. In particular, we were not sufficiently quick to realize that if we could not concentrate there was a serious possibility of the total disintegration of the Nucleus. Thus, while I do not think that you should have given up your job in September, I do think that we did not explore every conceivable possibility to carry out the move to Torino, and that we should have examined the question in more detail. In addition, we were probably incorrect to acquiesce in Federico's problems with jobs and other obligations in February. I want to stress that the motion does not necessarily mean that a different course should in fact have been adopted, and it certainly does not mean that we claim to have a better knowledge of the concrete situation in Italy than do the Italian comrades; simply that the various discussions were not thorough enough.

This relates to one of Federico's complaints that he has received varying (or even contradictory) views of what constitutes "centralization." The problem is that in fact it is not an absolute in practice. Our first conception, in the summer of 1975, when we were faced with the need to obtain six transfers to the same city within the teaching system, was that comrades must concentrate but that given the practical difficulties, anywhere in the industrial triangle was acceptable. Our preference was certainly Milano, but it was not clear to us whether that was technically feasible, and Torino was acceptable as second-best choice. I rather suspect, however, that you tried to transfer to Torino because you wanted to, not for technical reasons. At the time, we insisted on what we considered the essential point, namely, concentration, and did not argue about Torino vs. Milano vs. Genova, which in hindsight was an error.

In respect to Federico's situation, anywhere in the industrial triangle is "centralized" in terms of anywhere else in the triangle by comparison with London. At the same time, we have always had a perspective of real concentration, i.e., in a single city. When the possibility of a job in Genova came up, we acquiesced to the combined pressure of Federico and Fosco that (a) this was a good job and (b) Federico was unlikely to get a different one. In practice, we have tended to have a "concentration by stages" concept--and we are now paying for it.

For example, I simply do not believe that Federico cannot get a job within three months if he tried hard--but I am very reluctant to claim that I know what the possibilities of his getting a job are better than he does. It would be absurd to claim that I am more familiar than Fosco with the possibilities of getting extended leaves

of absence from his position. But what we did not insist on sufficiently were the dangers to the Nucleo if we did not concentrate. What we now have to do is to salvage a very bad situation.

Where Do We Go From Here?

This relates to the statement that both Fosco and Federico have to make a "qualitative" leap if we are to advance. Fosco needs both to resolve his political differences and be integrated into the tendency leadership so that he can play a constructive role (instead of an obstructionist one, as with his intervention in the November discussion with the OTR). Federico must overcome his sense of isolation and apparently incurable freelancing, as well as certain political problems. Most importantly, there needs to be a resolution of the tensions between them--about which we know next to nothing, since neither comrade has been willing to talk about them to any significant degree. We are not now willing to speculate on whether the comrades will in fact be able to concentrate--which in our view is a prerequisite to developing a really functioning organization. The example of Diddi is illustrative. You were no doubt too optimistic about him at the outset--but his apparent inability to last more than two months in only relative isolation is an indication that he probably would not make it anyway. Another example is that if the comrades cannot "manage" to have a meeting after a major confrontation with Fosco, then there isn't really any organization! I am unimpressed by Federico's personal excuses, and if Diddi's situation is really so bad, he should find another one. Lastly, you should have realized the importance of such a meeting and insisted: you must take political responsibility for seeing that the Nucleo functions, instead of constantly capitulating to "objective" reality, i.e., comrades' subjective weaknesses.

This has its most concrete expression in relation to the GBL. I think there is indeed a difference between us over how to deal with these rather classical London Bureau-style centrists, and that your attitude, as expressed in the 5 December letter, was much too soft and apologetic. I rather suspect that you agree with their criticisms of us for not publishing a response to their letter (what did you think of our letter replying to their 6 November letter?). We must indeed finish editing the letter to the GBL--but it was a mistake to claim that we will deal with the "Balance Sheet..." since we have no intention of doing so in our reply--thus giving them another excuse to complain.

It is clear that their differences with us will increase, not decrease. By themselves, the issues of voting for workers parties in a popular front and the national question (i.e., differences on where the class line lies) would preclude any fusion with them. In addition, however, their purely Menshevik letter of 6 November demonstrates that they are willing to resort to blatantly anti-Leninist conceptions for the sake of making a few cheap points. That letter testifies to their fundamental unseriousness (as we have noted in the case of Grisolia since the beginning). Clearly they have major differences concerning Italy as well, despite their claim to agree with our perspectives on trade-union work.

We should not be defensive toward them, but aggressive. We should seek to arrive at political clarification in writing, so that the record between us will be clear for the future. In that framework, I expect that they will shortly break off relations with us (no doubt on the grounds that we are ultra-left Oehlerite sectarians)--but a central goal must be to do everything possible to make them take the burden of breaking with us. At the present time there seems no basis to expect to recruit their leadership (Fernando and Grisolia) and even less their "rank and file" and its spokesmen (Gianfranco, Marco).

Two minor points: it is clear that Federico made a mistake in not finding out about their calls to his house; however, the central point (which apparently you did not make to them, at least in that context) is that the GBL should be in touch with Fosco, i.e., with the center. It is amusing that they think you put them in a bad light to the I.S. when we think you tend to be a bit soft on the GBL.

I would note in passing that the GBL critique of the NSd'I text on the elections in the October Il Militante is well taken on the woman question and concerning slogans--it is a good example of why we have insisted on extreme care and precision in articles.

On Italy in general, your statement concerning our "recent intervention [my emphasis] into the Italian situation" appears to imply that you disagree with the article in WV (aside from the headline, which we discussed at our meeting). If the disagreement is relatively minor, you should have written a letter to WV suitable for publication, correcting any false impressions that the article might have created (or some such formulation). If you have a substantive difference, you should also write. But simply to talk about "our" intervention into "your" country gives one the impression that you do not feel yourself part of the same organization (the old Anglo-Saxons vs. Latins question).

Basically, however, problems with articles on Italy are the result of the fact that we do not get enough information/articles from you. We have been trying unsuccessfully to get an article on the woman's movement for some time (and now Diddi has resigned). In addition, we very much want an article on the situation in the far-left--Lotta Continua, Avanguardia Operaia and the PdUP in particular--all of which are going through major crises at present. But you have not had much press consciousness in the past: and in the absence of articles or input from the Nucleo, we have been forced to write our own--with all the errors they may contain.

Three other minor points:

The "answer" to Giulio's letter was delayed by the Gerhard crisis and my trip to Europe. However, there is a methodological point to be made. While I agree that at this point the best thing would be simply to accept his resignation (assuming he has paid his pledge, which is doubtful). It would also be possible to expel him for indiscipline (and in other circumstances that would be preferable), but I imagine that we have not laid the basis for an expulsion

properly and to expel him would appear to be for political differences. However, it is not "the I.S. [that] decides"! As a rule, the I.S. intervenes in such cases after a section has made a decision, or in consultation with the leadership of the section. It is up to the Nucleo to decide (in consultation with the I.S.)--this is a crucial point of organizational functioning which you do not appear to understand, since we have had numerous minor disputes on subjects similar to this. The net result has been a consistent attempt to shift responsibility for political decisions that are in the domain of the NSd'I into the I.S., that is, a consistent refusal to take political responsibility for the NSd'I within the leading bodies of the iSt.

(The above was written before we received Giulio's ultimatum: about which I am writing separately.)

Concerning Diddi, I have no particular opinion, since I have never met the comrade, but it does not look as though he is recruitable in this period, whatever might happen if we have a functioning organization. We should aim to have a good sympathizer rather than a bad member, and hope that if we centralize he can be recruited if he is willing to move.

Finally, on the PDC: yes, it was a failure not to send you copies of Fernando's[*] letter concerning the Munoz campaign: it was one of the results of the brain lobe separation which occurred at that time as well as the fact that everyone was extremely overworked. I am enclosing copies.

To conclude, Alexandre expressed to me on the phone your concern that the I.S. was starting a purge, and this worry was also reflected in Federico's letter of 26 November. We certainly do not want to "get rid of" the NSd'I and have no intention of purging anyone. However, we do believe that (1) the situation in the Nucleo is very bad and (2) we do have serious doubts concerning the comrades' ability to forge a collective leadership and therefore also a viable organization. The increased pressure for political and organizational homogenization which we have noted in the cases of France and Germany is also apparent in Italy, and we must push forward with it. This means increased travel, if possible to the U.S. for extended periods of time, and increased political discussion.

At the same time, as you stated in your letter, only time--in particular in the framework of ongoing political work after concentration in Torino--will provide the ultimate test of our concerns. We will not prejudge the issue and would be very pleased if our worry has been misplaced.

Comradely greetings,

Sharpe

[*Fernando of the GBL]

[cc: Group I, plus Federico, Alexandre]