

Sept. 18, 1969.

Dear Ken,

Thank you for your letter of Sept. 15 and material enclosed, which I found very useful to publicize the matter. Our papers here, in France, ICP etc. will have the story already this week. I got people from the West-German and Italian radio to contact you. We'll do whatever we can to publicize to the utmost. If the thing comes off, action to make workers of large-scale electrical machinery construction plants on the continent (like Alsthom in France, ACEC in Belgium, Siemens in Germany etc.) show solidarity will have to be undertaken. We shall make a large effort in that sense.

You will remember that some years ago I wrote that a decisive turn in the struggle for socialism in Europe would come about, when the first large-scale strike for workers control would start. Perhaps the Liverpool business will remain too isolated to mean just that; but after May 1968 in France, it will in any case have been an important step forward, which should be viewed with the greatest sympathy by all revolutionary socialists. From that point of view, the work of the WCI, and the support I gave you in our movement, has certainly been vindicated, whatever may follow later.

From afar, one hesitates to give detailed advice. It is only possible to speak in generalities. Here however some of my ideas on the subject, as I understand the situation, after having read all the material you sent and ~~some~~ some I found in the British press:

1.- The general strategy should be one of an exemplary action against redundancy, for shop steward veto right against firing, for opening of the books and public accounting of all firms which receive government subsidies.- It should not be an action to show that the workers can run an isolated factory in a financially "more efficient" way than the bosses. IF you try to do the latter, you'll get in trouble very quickly. If you sell equipment built in the plant, the bosses will get a court injunction against stealing, and police intervention becomes unavoidable. You might want that at some point, but it would certainly not be the most efficient way to get it.

Also, manufacturing heavy equipment makes you dependent upon very rich buyers: governments or large-scale combines. If you want to sell something in order to get money (if the financial situation becomes too pressing), it would be best to switch production to some goods which could be sold to Cooperative Societies, local housewives and shops etc. This should not be difficult. In any case, I disadvise starting anything along these lines, as long as it is not unavoidable. The key should be on workers control, not on ~~workers~~ management, which is hopeless in an isolated case, outside of a revolutionary period.

2.- In conformity with the general strategy just outlined, the maximum effort should be made in favor of solidarity action of other parts of the British working class. Without such action, the movement is doomed. Such solidarity should be sought from three main directions:

- a) The Liverpool area in general.
- b) The GEC-EE combine in general (especially the Manchester plant also threatened with redundancy).
- c) Other industrial branches threatened with redundancy (miners, dockers, railwaymen etc.)

Solidarity should be: financial; through holding support demonstrations; through strikes; through other occupation of factories. This is the main dynamic which you should try to unleash.

3.- In order to achieve the maximum of solidarity, the maximum publicity should be attained, but not only general media publicity (papers, TV, radio), which reaches the anonymous public and the atomized workers, but ad hoc publicity which reaches the key people you want to reach, enumerated under point 2.

For that purpose, a whole series of proposals could be made. Here are some:

- a) Have the strikers publish a daily paper especially directed to the strikers themselves, their families, the Liverpool population, ~~the~~ all the workers of the GEC-EE combine and all the shop steward addresses of the rest of the country you can lay your hands on. The paper should be printed inside the plant (there is surely some office equipment to do this; otherwise some off-set equipment should be introduced). Daily bulletins should be sent to radio and TV, and if they are not regularly publicized, preparations should start to have an "official" radio-transmitter work from inside the plant, for the Liverpool area.
 - b) The action committee leading the strike should hold daily general assemblies, and should propose the regular reelection of the strike leadership, to have a maximum of support mobilized behind it.
 - c) Financial and food support should be handled by special ad hoc committees, into which a maximum of non-strikers (housewives, shop stewards from other factories of the Liverpool area) should be involved.
 - d) The action committee should call a regular meeting of all Liverpool shop stewards inside the occupied factory. It should also call for an-Britain GEC-EE shop stewards meeting inside the occupied factories.
- 4.- A key element of this strategy would be to get into your hands the bookkeeping records of the three plants. I presume that if the occupation comes about, the managers will take some of the key documents home. But you could have the shop stewards try to make a bold call to the banking employees of the banks with whom EE works in Liverpool, in order to send them a full file of all financial dealings of these three plants over the last 2 years. A special committee of experts should work on the records and try to find out: a) whether these three plants worked at a loss or at a profit (you could get big surprises). b) What was the real productivity per person employed. c) What was the real production cost of equipment built there. d) What was the real profit per piece of equipment built.- Any of these elements which show that Weinstock provokes redundancy not in order to avoid losses but to maximise profits (to get more profits elsewhere) would be a powerful weapon in your fight for winning Liverpool public opinion.

In any case, a success, even a modest one, along these lines, would make the strike a blow not only in favor of workers control over firing, but also ~~in~~ in favor of opening the books. It would be of historical significance.

5.- I fully agree with you that the main threat is a government scheme of redundancy payment so high that the workers don't give so much any more of being layed of. That was used successfully in Belgium during the crucial years 1963-65 to lower the militancy of the Walloon working class.

I can only see one counter-move: insist on the effect on the regional economy of Merseyside ~~in function~~ of the global level of em-

ployments being decisively lowered (that's what ^{is} happening with all the redundancies planned in the Liverpool area). Insist on the fact that the question is not one of saving individual workers' incomes, but of maintaining level of employment, income and ~~we~~ employment expectations for the whole region (which involves also the youth, and strongly so). Appeal to trade-unionists to make them understand that their strength risks of becoming decisively undermined if the level of unemployment rises and that of global employment declines, independently from the fact how much income the unemployed actually ~~will~~ receive.

I'm still afraid that a maneuver of the last minute will try to avoid this test of strength. The announcement that new power station will be built in Britain may pave the way for a concession by GEC-EE. If the test of strength comes about however, you should try to fight along above lines, in order to have a chance of winning. Anything which makes for an isolated fight or effort should be avoided; anything which makes the struggle overlap to other factories, areas, branches towns, is a key factor for winning: that should be the golden rule.

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On the other questions: I hope we shall have a lengthy and full discussion soon. I only want to take up one point you make in your letter, which leads right back to the main problem raised in my August 3 letter, i.e. the main question which seems to be in dispute between us.

You write: "Pablo's strategy could succeed with forces as large as you have in France". But that's begging the question, dear Ken! Why didn't Pablo's strategy lead anywhere in the world to accumulating "forces as large as we have in France", nay even forces as large as we have in Belgium? Is this just an accident, despite ten years of strenuous efforts to manipulate history in "alliance" with heads of state and of government, and powerful bureaucracies? Or isn't this precisely the result of his strategy, which makes him absolutely unable to build an organization and accumulate forces (a fact he might now even have come to recognize, and to rationalize at that!)? As I said before, if you will follow his example, you will only succeed in doing what he succeeded in showing, i.e. that all his efforts are pour le roi de Prusse, that he ends up in working for alien social and political forces.

Without an independent organization of revolutionary cadres, any maneuver is in the long run condemned to failure. The question is not whether you should or whether you should not look for allies among trade-union bosses, "liberal" communists, revolutionary nationalists etc. etc. The question is what makes the prior condition for success of such maneuvers, from the point of view of socialist revolution. And there my answer is very simple: only if you have your own strong organization can you maneuver with success. If you don't have such an organization, you think you maneuver, but in reality you are maneuvered by stronger social forces. This is what Lenin and Trotsky taught. This is to what I stick, on the basis also of my own experience. On this key question you remain silent.

To come nearer to your home-ground: wouldn't the occupation of Liverpool EE-plants give much more results of a lasting nature - in the form of raising workers militancy and consciousness all through the country, and making sure that these results remain even when the movement finally recedes as it inevitably will - if you had in Britain what we have in France to-day, to wit a revolutionary organiza-

tion of several thousands of members, present in every major city and in many of the major factories of the country, capable of organizing solidarity actions independently from decisions of the bureaucracy (solidarity meetings, demonstrations, short strikes, longer strikes), having at its disposal a weekly paper with a press run of 50,000 and factory papers which run into several 100,000 copies? Without such an organization, all you can hope for is spontaneous generation of consciousness, cadres and solidarity action; isn't it preferable to have systematic, conscious and organized efforts in that direction rather than hope for such spontaneous generation? The advantages are so obvious that I still hope you won't dispute them. But that's what our discussion is really about: the possibility and the necessity to combine the building of a revolutionary cadre organization with the kind of work of organizing left shop stewards you have started to undertake. Wouldn't they evidently help and strengthen each other?

It is not all a question of a "youth-dominated strategy for the working class". Nobody, to my knowledge, at least in our movement, proposes such nonsense. It is a question of a youth-dominated strategy for building a first efficient basis of a revolutionary cadre organization, which is something entirely different. Such an organization, in order to be able to act efficiently - i.e. to be able to act and not only to comment, criticize and sneer - must overcome a certain numerical threshold, must realize a certain primitive accumulation of forces. Only in that case will it be able to act decisively in any field, inclusive of the one of unions and workers struggles. And this first accumulation of forces will be achieved under present conditions mainly (not at all exclusively, it is true, but mainly) among youth. Once it is achieved, this cadre can work in many fields including the factories, with ten-fold efficiency. You are wrong when you assume that we are "buying" influence in youth by "capitulating" to its "follies". We don't tail-end any-one, and certainly not ultra-lefts. We educate our new members in the spirit of Leninism (which includes that of "Infantile Disorder"), not in the spirit of anarchism or adventurism. We shall be able to start actions like the Liverpool one in many factories, and to build forces in several unions which will have mass support of workers behind them. But we give the priority to building a revolutionary cadre organization, in order to prepare a socialist revolution. This takes precedence over anything, including trying to make friends with shop stewards.

What alternative strategy can you propose? As the people you work with to-day, the automobile shop stewards etc., only agree with parts of your programme, have only partial consciousness (which might even collapse through a swift change in the situation), your only alternative is to hope and pray that your individual power of persuasion will somehow overcome this not-small obstacle when the hour strikes. This seems to me an illusion, and means really that you replace an attempt to build a community of people thinking in the same way on all key issues by an attempt to manipulate people. This will never be successful. You will never dubably influence tens or hundreds of thousands of people, if you haven't gained several thousands to your full program. To attempt to do this with a handful of followers that's Pablo's key illusion. If you share that illusion, you'll fare as badly as he fared.

We do not seem to use the word "mainstream" quite in the same sense. For me, a stream is something which is moving, not something stagnant, or worse, something which prevents other from moving. In that sense, notwithstanding their millions of members, neither the CGT nor the CGIL, nor the West-German DGB are the instream to-day. What counts here is not the number of members or votes, but the

initiatives taken and the action started. All these seemingly powerful organizations have been unable and unwilling to act during the last years (except to "act" in order to prevent the workers from acting). They didn't start the May 1968 struggle in France. They didn't start the present upheaval in Italy. They didn't start the general strike in Argentina. Even in such a conservative and conformist country like Western-Germany, they didn't start the strikes of the last two weeks. Every single one of these "movements" have been started by forces outside of their control. It might be that the situation in Britain is different there, that there is still enough rank-and-file autonomy and militancy inside the official union network to make this different. But even in that case you should have had a close look at what is happening in all these other industrial countries. That is what I stressed again and again to you, that you are continuing to use formulas correct 20 or 15 or 10 years ago, but which are obviously bypassed by events. The old apparatuses still control millions of workers, undoubtedly, compared to whom we are still a tiny minority. But those who start actions, who are the mainstream of the present movement, do so because they have already escaped from that control, and they are counted already by the hundreds of thousands. It would be a disastrously wrong workers strategy to refuse to appeal first of all to these workers - who play the key role of vanguard of their class to-day - under the pretext that a mass still follows passively the apparatus, as long as there is "business as usual", while forgetting that even that larger mass is increasingly being brought into action by the vanguard, over the heads of the apparatus.

In that sense, the main thing happening inside the mass organizations of the continent is not the need to ally ourselves with this or that part of the apparatus (these alliances will come about later from a position of strength) but to follow the cracks inside the apparatus and the people still obeying them, which result from mass actions.

That's why, in my opinion, with the exception of Britain, the mainstream of the movement - not to speak of the revolutionary movement - does not go through your backyard, because I cannot see either Krasucki, or Trentin, or Tito as representing that "mainstream" to-day. That's why we are much nearer to that mainstream internationally than you can be with all your international contacts in high places. That's why you are in high danger of being cut off from that very mainstream by leaving the F.I. That's why your lack of understanding of what's happening to-day internationally - being impressed with the CGT winning new members, and not seeing that since one year there broke out in France literally hundreds of strikes against the wish and outside of the control of the CGT apparatus, which, more realistically than you, openly expresses its rising fear of the "leftists" who threaten their control - should be a danger signal to you, showing you what would be the results to your own consciousness and political understanding if you break with the F.I.

Warmest greetings from Gisela and me.

