

PO Box 902
Ellicott Station
Buffalo, NY 14205

To All Chapters, Contacts, Regions and the National Office of
VVAW/WSO:

Dear Brothers & Sisters,

Effective June 8th, 1975, I have resigned as New York-Northern
New Jersey Regional coordinator and from VVAW/WSO. I feel that
VVAW/WSO has ceased to be an effective mass organization and that
it is no longer capable of making significant contributions to
the political struggles in this country. With the liberations
in Indochina and the acquittal of Gary Lawton, the last major
areas where we had any real working unity have been resolved.
What is predominant now in VVAW/WSO is sectarianism, arrogance
and a growing purge mentality that has no place in a mass
organization.

The current internal situation in VVAW/WSO is not a good one. The
unity of past years has been replaced with distrust, rumor
mongering and contempt for opposing views. In the past month and
a half, the three largest and most active regions have split.
The coordinators of these regions have left VVAW/WSO - Jerry
Kosanovic of KOINKVWAWPA and myself by resignation and Jeanne
Friedman of Cal/Nev who has been purged and subjected to intense
abuse for her efforts towards building VVAW/WSO. Other regions
in the country are either dominated by one chapter or are also
split.

The situation in the NY-NNJ Region is a reflection of the national
situation. Westchester/Putnam chapter has resigned and other
chapters are considering it. Political and material support
for each other's efforts is about nil. Members with honest
questions and differences with the dominant line in most chapters
are no longer welcomed as brothers and sisters. New York City
and Newark/Jersey City chapters have been consistently intolerant
of the problem other chapters face in implementing the national
program, yet at the same time have brought forth little concrete
proof of it's success. Buffalo chapter has outrightly refused
to implment the program as passed by the National Steering
Committee.

With this much disunity in the region and nationally, it has
been impossible to build a political organization. Good people
have been driven off by the sectarianism they've seen. That new
people still join says more about material conditions in this
country than about our organizing efforts. I'm afraid that many

of them will drop out before too long feeling cynical and disillusioned. The Revolutionary Union and the National Office of VVAW/WSO must take the major portion of the blame for this disunity and sectarianism.

When the RU first became involved in VVAW/WSO - in the spring of 1974 and up to the July 4th demos - they brought many new and badly needed ideas to us. These scientific concepts were new to many of us and brought about a major advance in our development as an organization and as individuals. They included the need for a focus and consistent practice around it, the need for a defined basis of unity in a mass organization such as ours, and the need to understand the relationship between antiimperialist forces and a revolutionary party firmly rooted in the people. Building on these concepts, it follows that much of RU's specific proposals appeared to be "objectively" correct. Appearances aside, however, RU's practice in implementing it's proposals and lines, especially in the period since the last NSCM at St. Louis, has negated all of this. They have used the membership and name of VVAW/WSO in their opportunistic drive to establish themselves as the party of the proletariat.

VVAW/WSO at one time was a true spontaneous movement. Thousands of vets, mostly working class, claimed membership because of our political opposition to American imperialism. Many of these vets had little or no contact with the core of VVAW/WSO other than an awareness of the name and of such actions as the Winter Soldier Investigation into War Crimes, Dewey Canyon III and the seizure of the Statue of Liberty. These were the people who gave VVAW/WSO it's mass nature and widespread credibility both in the anti-war and anti-imperialist movements and among the American masses. During 1973, we lost most of these people through a combination of poor leadership - especially on the regional level, a lack of focus and program, and idealism. That we lost these members is hardly RU's fault. In fact, part of RU's initial appeal was that they spoke to these questions. In essence, however, RU's arrogant and left-opportunist practice is a betrayal of the struggles and credibility of these masses of vets.

How has RU's practice done this? It has been divisive - both internally and in terms of driving wedges between VVAW/WSO and other principled anti-imperialist forces, as well as between us and the broad masses of people in this country. It has been arrogant and contemptuous - both of the masses and of democracy within VVAW/WSO. It has been racist and sexist - RU consistently downplays the importance of these struggles. It has been dictated by the logic of expediency - a logic that sacrifices political struggle for pre-determined goals. It has been economist - that is, it has separated economic concerns

from political concern in it's mass work. This is a view of the lowest level of political unity bringing out the greatest number of people. In essence, this is an anti-communist view. Most importantly, their analysis is consistently undialectic and idealistic. It sees the ruling class and it's allies as a consolidated block troubled only by minor splits. This negates the theory of contradiction and robs us of one of our greatest weapons in favor of simplistic solutions.

The minority forces in VVAW/WSO have made many mistake. Most of these mistakes have been the result of idealism and a detachment from the masses; some have been caused by opportunism and obstructionism on the part of individual members or chapters. The minority is not a consolidated force, though. It includes a wide range of people, many of whom agree with the intent of the majority program. Most of the mistakes made by the minority could have been corrected through struggle and practice, had this been done in a principled manner. RU's role in the struggle, on the other hand, is that of a consolidated force working according to a predetermined strategy. The chances of RU and it's supporters - such as the National Office - correcting their errors and rectifying their practice are virtually non-existent.

Although my main reason for leaving VVAW/WSO is because we have ceased to be an effective mass organization, there are a few related reasons. One of them is the purge in California and the support of the NO for it. Only the National Steering Committee has the power to expel chapters or restructure regions - for whatever reasons. This is as true of the newest draft working paper as of the one currently effective. This is not legalism - this is a policy that grew out of past struggles in VVAW/WSO. Southern California's action is clearly a violation of this and the NO's "request" tha the NSC ratify it is a backhanded and contemptuous slap at the membership of VVAW/SWO. At the last NY-NNJ Regional meeting, the delegates - from all chapters - were unanimously opposed to the NO usurping the powers and responsibilities of the NSC. This is what the NO is doing. It is especially hypocritical in light of RU's and the NO's insistence on using a clearly unrepresentative voting policy at the St. Louis NSCM - even while a better policy was being worked up - in order to ram through the votes on base and focus and on the national program.

Another reason is the April-May issue of Winter Soldier. A good part of the issue is taken up with articles on UWOC, RSB, Mayday (even using RU's own poster graphic) and Prairie Fire. This is little more than a rehash of RU's mass work and is hardly surprising. What is surprising, however, is that RU is mentioned

only four times in the issue and then only in a peripheral way. If what the RU is doing is a good thing, why isn't there any mention of this at all. This is nothing but contempt for the masses. Does the NO think that readers of WS live in some never-never land removed from real events or that they are incapable of comprehending socialism or communism?

A third reason is the NO's description of the Mary Jo Cook case in WS and the national newsletter. Having an FBI informant in the Buffalo chapter has taught us a lot about who the real enemy is - more than all of the various position papers on the two-line struggle. The FBI always seeks to intensify internal struggles and cause splits in progressive organizations as a routine part of their political work. In VVAW/WSO these days, they don't have to work very hard. The fact that Mary Jo Cook voluntarily came forward to tell of her role as an informer is significant, especially coming a few months after Joe Burton's similar disclosure in Florida. This is part of a rising trend that started in the heyday of the Vietnam war and that is shaking every sector of the state apparatus. As the crisis of imperialism intensifies, so too will this contradiction. This doesn't mean that people such as Mary Jo Cook or Joe Burton can be trusted or that they have good politics. They rarely go beyond reformism. Still, they should be given credit for their act of coming forth to help expose the state. The NO has used this incident not to build the people's movement, but to push their line.

This is not an easy step for me to take. The friendships I've made and the political lessons I've learned are irreplaceable and will always be a part of me. The struggles I've participated in have shown me the true meaning of comradeship. The victories we've shared - Cainesville, Nixon's downfall, Indochina, Lawton's and Hood's acquittal - aren't diminished by any of this. I'd like to hear from people and hope we can build the unity we need for future work.

In Solidarity,

/s/ Steve Hassett

"Ho Chi Minh and Lenin showed us the way.

Imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism. Lenin taught us that imperialism is a system vastly more powerful than any system of the past. Amateurs and ignorant people should not play at the struggle against it. Imperialism, because of its evolutionary process, is fraught with contradictions. Revolutionaries must know how to prepare themselves so that they will be ready when these contradictions burst, to seize upon them, to break the weakest line of the system."

Nguyen Khac Vien
Tradition and Revolution
In Vietnam