

Milwaukee Alliance
P.O. Box 12029
Milwaukee, Wisc. 53212
September 22, 1978

To the Steering Committee of the OC-IC

Comrades:

On behalf of the Milwaukee Alliance we would like to respond to your letter dated 8/3/78. In that letter you rejected the MA's request that PUL be allowed to participate in the upcoming conferences.

You argued that the trend organizations challenging Pt. 18 have done so out of a desire to insure that the OC develops "the maximum potential to take up the struggle against ultra-leftism"; while the PUL has challenged Pt. 18 to gain a hearing for its "main blow against the Soviet Union" thesis.

Before dealing with the substance of your argument, we would like to take exception with your characterization of the PUL position. We challenge you to provide documentation of this assertion. Where, for example, has PUL put forth in writings, discussions, or practice their alleged "main blow against the Soviet Union" thesis?

In our discussions with them, PUL has said that it unites with the perspective that US revolutionaries must primarily target US imperialism. To our knowledge, they have never expressed the view that the world's people must direct "the main blow at the Soviet Union"; rather that there must be a united front against the two superpowers. To mischaracterize the PUL's position is a serious error which reflects at best a non-rigorous methodology of not investigating PUL's position and just assuming all organizations that hold to a "two superpowers line" are equivalent with the incorrect policies of the CP(ML), or the mischaracterization reflects at worst a conscious attempt to slander PUL and divide it from other anti-'left' forces in the OC by implying that it has a secret or hidden agenda. Perhaps having PUL attend the conferences as full participants would enable you to get an accurate picture of their perspective.

In our original letter of July 8, 1978, we argued that since the question of whether Pt. 18 should be a line of demarcation is to be the topic of the conferences there is no longer any basis to exclude those anti-'left', anti-revisionist forces who in the past have been excluded from the OC because of their disagreement with Pt. 18. By allowing PUL to participate, we said, the OC would ensure a well rounded two line struggle between the most developed perspectives of both sides.

Unfortunately, you did not respond to this argument directly. Rather, you argued that PUL should continue to be excluded because they held a "different" position than ours, were not "internal" to the OC, and so on. We will show that there are not two "distinct" positions among the anti-Point 18 forces, although there are obviously two distinct lines between the anti-Point 18 forces and the pro-Point 18 forces -- principally over party-building line and secondarily on questions of international line. It is for the purpose of ensuring the clearest and sharpest class struggle over these opposing lines that we are again requesting PUL's participation in the upcoming conferences.

While it is true that we do not have as consolidated positions on the international situation (or certain other lines for that matter) as PUL,

we are opposed to using Point 18 as a way to split anti-'left' forces in an unprincipled fashion. Contrary to your assertion, there is no substantial difference between the arguments that we and PUL have advanced against Pt. 18. There is no basis to say that PUL is not "...primarily concerned with the question of what lines of demarcation must be drawn in order to consolidate an anti-'left' tendency with the maximum potential to take up the struggle against ultra-leftism." All of their polemics have shown precisely this concern! The unstated premise of your letter appears to be that since the PUL has a consolidated position against Pt. 18, and we do not, they are cynically using arguments against sectarianism as a cover for advancing their own position.

Based on our readings of PUL's writings -- including Two, Three Many Parties of a New Type?, 'It's Not the Bus': Busing and the Democratic Struggle In Boston, 1974-1975, and The Ultra-Left Danger and How to Fight It -- we are positive that their intentions are principled as they struggle against ultra-leftism in the party-building movement, not directed by some sinister "motivation" of gaining hearings for its "main blow against the Soviet Union" thesis". We should also note that in our discussions and correspondence with PUL they have been very open to struggle, including questions of international line.

Thus for you to state in your letter that the "basis" for our positions (PUL's and forces like ourselves in the OC) are "quite different", that there's "different motivation", and that upon "deeper examination" there are "two distinct positions" makes us wonder what real "examination" has been done. We believe these statements to be incorrect and we'll await proof that PUL's and our own "motivation" does not primarily rest in our concern to develop "the maximum potential to take up the struggle against ultra-leftism." (For the MA's position we suggest you refer again to our letter of 5/10/78.)

On the other hand, the continued exclusion of the PUL from the OC and the lack of struggle over Pt. 18 and its role as a line of demarcation, shows to us that the OC has not developed the maximum potential to take up the struggle against ultra-leftism. For example, to our knowledge few OC groups have studied the international situation, revisionism, or the USSR; no organization has put forth a full position on these questions; no relevant study materials have been provided from the OC; and little collective discussion and struggle has taken place on the inter-relation of party building and international line. At the same time some of the leading members of the OC -- who have definitive positions on the nature of the USSR, revisionism, and the international situation -- have pushed very hard for the OC as a whole to take a very specific position on the international situation, without ever having a rigorous, collective (OC-wide) debate and discussion on the content of that question, and without including any anti-'left' forces who hold to a two superpowers line.

Now that we've established that the primary concern of both PUL and ourselves over Pt. 18 rests with party-building line, it is worth noting that we are also "motivated" by concern over the content of Point 18. This is a secondary concern, which in your letter you neglected to attribute to the "bulk of forces" in the OC, rather you just attributed it to your version of PUL's international line. By showing that we also hold similar concerns we will show that your characterizations of the anti-Pt. 18 forces having "two distinct" positions once again falls on its face.

We, and here we would also include PUL, are secondarily concerned with the specific formulation in Pt. 18 which we think is indicative of a tendency among

leading forces in the OC to conciliate towards revisionism, Our concern is fueled by positions of leading members of the Steering Committee of the OC that the USSR is "socialist"; by Clay N.'s statement that the "progressive" aspects of USSR foreign policy are due to the "socialist base" being dominant over the revisionist party; by Point 16 which characterizes "modern revisionism" as having a "petty-bourgeois essence"; and by Clay N. having argued that our proposed Pt. 19 on continuation of class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat and within the vanguard party is a "deferred" question which to unify on would "unnecessarily split" the anti-'left' forces. Unfortunately our concerns don't end here. For example, Clay N.'s paper on the international situation, entitled "Presentation for the PWOC", written in 1977 when he debated Irwin Silber is supposedly a summation of the international situation since WW II. Funny to us, how a leading comrade trying to forge an anti-revisionist party would have little to say about the Sino-Soviet split except that it represents a non-antagonistic contradiction and would fail to mention any negative aspects of the USSR's foreign policy (besides "...the Soviet's role in Cambodia, and in other places -- in Vietnam and what not." p. 10) such as the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The same thing occurred in the struggle this spring in the MA. The polemics on the international situation written by the comrades who split never mentioned any negative aspects of the foreign policy of the USSR and generally downplayed the struggle against revisionism.

We bring up these concerns not to debate at this time their validity, but to prove to you that we are not some naive, well-intentioned dupes for the PUL. Rather it is our position that there are not two "distinct" positions among the anti-Point 18 forces: We and PUL have a primary concern on how lines of demarcation are being drawn in order to unite as many anti-'left' forces as possible, and we, as well as PUL, are secondarily concerned with a political line that we think conciliates with revisionism.

So given that there are not two "distinct" positions coming from two different "motivations" among us anti-Pt. 18 forces, what is the rationale for excluding PUL from being full participants at the conferences? Your concern about "blurring the lines" between us and PUL of course doesn't stand as we have pointed out that there is a significant amount of unity between PUL and us on this particular issue. What our concern is, in fact, is that the real distinctions and lines between the pro- and anti-Point 18 forces not be blurred.

The only other argument you offer is that "the conferences around Point 18 should concentrate on resolving the differences internal to the OC, leaving the OC's divergence with PUL to be addressed in a different context." We unite with a perspective of first resolving the contradictions internal to the OC, and we are pleased that the OC has chosen to re-examine Point 18 as a line of demarcation. What is incorrect about your position is to pose PUL's "divergence" with the OC as external, for in fact upon even surface examination one sees that the PUL's political line and ideological perspective have been very integral to one side of the struggle within the OC, even though organizationally PUL has been kept external to the OC. What is the supporting evidence? Look at the papers written for the February '78 conference by BPO, WUO and CUO and look at PWOC's responses to them in the form of position papers and later a long series of articles debating PUL in the Organizer. Look at the papers written at the time certain comrades left the Milwaukee Alliance. We can't understand how anyone could fail to see the way PUL's political perspective has played a role internal to struggles in the OC.

How convenient for you to argue essentially that PUL must be excluded because you have always excluded them, even though the line of demarcation which they have been excluded on in the past is now up for discussion and reconsideration.

To us this makes no sense. Your arguments for their exclusion do not stand the test of "deeper examination". We can only conclude that their exclusion is more likely based on a wrong understanding of class struggle and its need to:

- a) distinguish between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions;
- b) sharpen, rather than blur, two line struggle;
- c) allow a contradiction of a two line struggle to reach maturation, within the confines of the historical situation, prior to determining it to be antagonistic.
- d) do rigorous investigation and resolve contradictions in a scientific manner;
- e) grasp and act on what is primary, but don't neglect the secondary; and
- f) do all within the strategic perspective of "unite the many to defeat the few".

Comrades, we are looking forward to the regional conferences. We think that determining what are proper lines of demarcation is critical in order to forge an anti-'left', anti-revisionist trend. We are also deeply aware, and worried we might add, of the differences that currently exist within the international communist movement and the damaging affect both 'leftism' and rightism, specifically revisionism, have had in the communist movement in this country in regard to international line. But the degree to which we look favorably at these upcoming conferences, is the degree to which we think there will be healthy class struggle. In all honesty, we have not been impressed with either the quantity or quality of struggle within the Organizing Committee, and to the best of our knowledge, the Committee of Five, on these important questions (party-building line and international line).

We hope that these conferences under the leadership of the SC will break with the past and have a qualitatively better two line struggle. This would be most ensured with the inclusion of PUL, the most theoretically advanced proponent of not having Pt. 18 a line of demarcation. It is our assumption that through the personage of the Steering Committee the most theoretically advanced of the pro-Pt. 18 forces will be present ^{at} all three regional conferences.

Two decisions at the second meeting of the SC-OCIC, however, are steps backwards, away from healthy two-line struggle: one being the definition of observers and the other being the exclusion of PUL. Frankly, the status given observers puzzles us, as we've never heard of observers being limited to such a role of being able to speak only when "a delegate...permits an observer to represent them." Why not, instead, allow observers the right to speak, but not the right to vote? If necessary, and if there were dozens and dozens of people wanting to be observers, the SC could limit the total amount allowed to attend. (We doubt this situation would develop.) The present way in which the SC limits observers' speaking rights shows how little interest the SC has in promoting two-line struggle. Given the geographic location of the minority position organizations -- in the East and Midwest -- how are both lines going to be represented at the West Coast conference? Or is someone from the majority position going to accurately portray the minority position, say, as accurately as Clay N. portrayed PUL's position in his letter of 8/3/78?

Furthermore, we request that the SC reconsider its decision and allow the PUL to attend all three regional conferences in observer status, given that that means they have the right to speak without "representing" someone, but not the right

to vote. Although we have held all along that the PUL should have been full participants in the OC with voting rights, we compromise on this point in regard to these conferences as we are most concerned that they be allowed to speak.

Thus in the interests of promoting the healthiest two-line struggle to enable the OC to take a solid step forward we hope that at your next meeting the SC will revise its definition of observers and decide to allow PUL to participate as observers at all three regional conferences.

We must discard all vestiges of sectarianism, plan to have the clearest possible two line struggle, in order to move forward the class struggle within the communist movement and contribute to the eventual rectification and re-establishment of the communist party in the USA.

We are willing to meet on this matter if you deem it to be useful. We have stated our position clearly in this letter and will be waiting further word from the Steering Committee of the OC.

In the spirit of
unity-struggle-unity,

Executive Committee of the
Milwaukee Alliance.

enc. two: letters of 7/7/78
cc.: members of the SC-OCIC
members of OC
PUL
Guardian
El Comité