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Revolutionary Marxist Committee
P.O.Box 134
Detroit, Michigan
USA 48221

Alan Jones
c/o IMG

May 11, 1977

Dear Alan:

Enclosed is a letter which we just sent to a group in Britain called the Workers Power group. Let me repeat the same questions which Bruce Landau asked you in a recent letter concerning the Workers League (GB): Is there anything we could do to improve your relations with Workers Power (assuming that this is your own desire)? Could you tell us anything about them? As you know, we have contact with a number of small groups in Britain. Of course we want to use whatever political influence we may have over these groups to encourage them to move in the direction of Trotskyist unification with the USec and with the IMG in Britain. On the other hand, we don't want to do anything which would go against the policies and orientation of the IMG. It would therefore be very helpful for us if you could indicate the IMG's attitude toward the groups with which we have contact, as well as making any specific recommendations which you may have.

Communist greetings,
s/Eric Olsen

Eric Olsen
for the National Committee
RMC

ps. The National Committee asked me to inquire in this letter as to whether or not the IMG would be interested in placing a bulk order for our recent Revolutionary Marxist Papers #11, which contains our political resolution and unification proposals. As it stands, the IMG has received a copy of this document as part of our regular exchange. But we thought it would be a good idea for you to order a number of them so that the widest number of the members of the IMG who are interested could easily get hold of them.

cc: USFI
SWP (US)

Revolutionary Marxist Committee
P. O. Box 134
Detroit, Michigan
USA 48221

Workers Power Group
1a Camberwell Grove
LONDON SE 5
Great Britain

- May 5, 1977

Dear comrades:

The Revolutionary Marxist Committee is a Detroit-based US Trotskyist organization numbering in a few dozens. Since our inception as an organization (September, 1975), our group has sought contact and discussion with all currents and tendencies in the international Marxist movement. Some weeks back we received a copy of Workers Power #3. WP3 is the first and only contact or knowledge we have of your group's history and politics. Enclosed you will find a copy of the most recent issue of our publication, Revolutionary Marxist Papers, which summarizes our past and states our program and basic perspectives.

Judging from WP3 and especially the article "Failure of a Fusion" and your platform, "Where We Stand", there appears to be a considerable similarity in the political evolution and political outlook of our two groups. Our group, like yours, originated as an expelled faction from the IS milieu, breaking with the IS's economism, national parochialism, and un-Leninist views on program and party-building. Somewhat similar experiences to yours with regard to the Workers Fight group were encountered by us in the US group, the Revolutionary Socialist League: tin-pot Bolshevism, leadership cliquism, lack of seriousness toward the development of program and theory, a disregard in practice of the centrality of the vanguard, and a refusal to put forward a clear and systematic strategy for reconstructing the Fourth International. Like yourselves, we consider our evolution as one of drawing closer to the methods and program of Trotskyism, with, however, criticisms of its current representatives. Like yourselves, we consider the Stalinist societies to be state capitalist. In addition, there appear to be a number of other points of political agreement between us. I shall not continue this list of comparisons, but rather urge again that you examine our enclosed publication, RMP #11.

If we have grasped correctly your outlook on the question of party-building, we are in agreement that the role of a propaganda group at this stage must entail an orientation to the most advanced workers, propaganda emphasizing the needs of the most oppressed, and debate and common work with left-moving radical and especially Trotskyist forces with the aim of achieving principled fusions and regroupments. We may, however, have a disagreement as to what course of action this outlook must lead to under today's conditions. Of especial concern to us in this regard is your attitude toward the existing Trotskyist movement and especially the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. While we seem to have a generally similar appraisal of the USFI (agreement with the decisive parts of the legacy of Trotskyism -- e.g., importance of the crisis of leadership, permanent revolution, core propositions of the CI and the 1938 Transitional Program -- but disagreement with the current USFI on the class nature of the Stalinist societies and with the USFI's view of permanent revolution as an automatic process that can operate through petty bourgeois blunt instruments), we may differ on the appropriate regroupment policy to adopt towards the USFI and its sections. As elaborated in RMP #11, our group believes that principled fusions among Trotskyists are both possible and necessary in this period. We agree with the section of your platform (the section entitled "The Principle Planks of Our Platform") which states:

"For a revolutionary party based on a transitional programme and

organized according to the principles of democratic-centralism -- full freedom of political debate, disciplined unity in action.

For the reconstruction of the Fourth International on the basis of an international transitional programme and a democratic-centralist practice."

And we agree with your last plank, which states:

"We commit ourselves to polemic, debate and discussion with other tendencies of the Left to clarify the political differences, the possibilities of joint work, and to lay the basis for a principled regroupment on an international and national basis."

However, we would stress that the end (reconstruction of the FI) and the means (debate and discussion, joint work, and principled regroupments) must be linked up in a concrete and practical strategy. For us this has meant seeking fusion as a tendency with the US Socialist Workers Party (which is in political sympathy with the USFI but prevented from membership as a section due to reactionary laws).

In our view, fusions of this kind are principled just because the main strategic task of this period is the reconstruction of the Fourth International, a process which must begin from where the Trotskyist movement is today. Forging the Fourth International from the various forces outside Stalinism was Trotsky's method in the 1930s. Today we must begin with the existing international Trotskyist movement. Without fusions of this kind the organizational fragmentation of the Trotskyist movement will continue to prevent the kind of joint work, debate and common organizational life necessary for the political clarification which is in turn necessary for the construction of a revolutionary international with solidly-based programmatic and political foundations. Without such fusions the extant political differences among Trotskyists will continue to generate more organizational splintering, greater dead-end sectarianism, small group cultism and impotence, exaggeration of differences, etc. -- all at the expense of a common Trotskyist front against the clear-cut opponents of revolutionary Marxism (Stalinism, Maoism, social democracy) as well as at the expense of the kind of political clarification based on joint or common work, mutual respect and trust, and discipline that will be needed to achieve a revolutionary democratic-centralist international. While it is obviously not without underlying political causes -- historic political causes -- the vicious circle of factionalism, splitting and political posturing, fragmentation, inflation of differences and so on plaguing the Trotskyist movement today can and must be broken.

You state at one point in your platform:

The revolutionary party cannot be built on a national basis alone. We fight to build an international democratic-centralist party -- to combat the bourgeoisie on the basis of an international programme for workers power. Such an international programme and party must be built on the lessons and experience of the first four Congresses of the Communist International and the re-elaboration of the 1938 programme of the Fourth International.

Workers Power does not believe such an international party exists. Neither has the necessary programmatic work been completed. The Fourth International needs to be re-created around a re-elaborated transitional program on a democratic-centralist basis.

This poses but does not answer the question of the international. What practical course do you derive from this plank? The FI will not be reconstructed unless today's Trotskyists take responsibility for making it come about through discussion and debate based on loyal and patient party building within the main Trotskyist organizations. In WP 3 you write that you and Workers Fight both agreed that: "Against the USFI we

both insisted that an International in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky still had to be built". In our opinion, this statement simply misses the point. What practical strategy do you propose for building this international? And where does the USFI fit into this strategy? We do not think it is enough to simply "insist against the USFI" that an international in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky still has to be built. For in the meantime, the USFI continues to exist, it is without question the only viable international Trotskyist organization of any significance in the world today, it is more and more clearly becoming the center of regroupment for Trotskyist forces, it is growing rapidly, it has sections in sixty countries, and, more importantly, it is the only international current which has important sections in those countries which are emerging in this period as the pivotal areas of the class struggle where the political differences within the Trotskyist movement can be put to a serious and practical test. For all these reasons we think that to pose the question "Is the USFI today the Fourth International in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky?" is to pose the question in the wrong way to begin with. For our part, while we have a number of serious political differences with the USFI we consider it to be a revolutionary organization. More importantly, we think that debates over whether or not the USFI is "the" international are essentially abstract and sterile. To our minds, the real issue is this: a) the USFI can certainly become "the" international, and b) most important, it is the only international Trotskyist organization which has this potential.

We are therefore firmly convinced that unless a tendency is willing to join the USFI and work within its sections in a loyal and disciplined fashion it cannot and will not be able to play any serious role in building a revolutionary mass international in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky. The argument that "the USFI today is not 'the' international" was precisely the basis for Healy and Cliff's "go it alone" strategy. Hence their "build the national party first" perspective. You know the result. It is not entirely clear to us from WP3 what your perspective is. But it appears to us that you envisage a strategy which attempts to elaborate a program which will be the only basis upon which you will consider fusion with other organizations. That is to say, your perspective is that of a long term independent organization whose goal is to build an international organization in opposition to the USFI. If this is so (and we readily admit that we are only speculating on the basis of the little knowledge which we have of your organization), then we think you are making a serious mistake. We believe that it is impossible for a small tendency which exists in only one (or even three or four) countries to construct a viable international under today's conditions. To make such an attempt outside of and in opposition to the USFI is, in our opinion, to commit the classic mistake which Lenin inveighed against time and again of attempting to "jump over the head of the vanguard". Regardless of the differences which you (or we) may have with the USFI, it is absolutely clear -- as the events in Iberia, to name just one example, demonstrate recently -- that the political evolution of the USFI is the pivot of the struggle to build the Fourth International. It is for this reason that we think that the place of any serious tendency is within the USFI, struggling to correct the political mistakes of the USFI on a democratic centralist basis while at the same time undertaking loyal and disciplined responsibility for building the USFI and its national sections.

We expect to fuse with the SWP(US) in a matter of months. Should you feel interested in pursuing a correspondence with us on the above or any other questions, we are eager to do so so long as we remain an independent organization. After fusion, the RMC will cease to exist as an independent organization and our correspondence will of course thenceforth be regulated by the norms of the SWP's and the USFI's democratic centralism. In the meantime, please understand that copies of our correspondence with other tendencies are made available -- as a routine courtesy and as part of the process of consummating an honest and loyal fusion -- to the SWP and the United Secretariat. In addition, we also send a copy of our correspondence with British organizations to the IMG.

We would be interested in exchanging views on all aspects of your politics and ours. very shortly we will be producing a new Revolutionary Marxist Papers devoted

to the question of state capitalism and the proletarian dictatorship. The RMPs which we have already produced thus far cover a wide terrain: questions of party-building, the national question, Portugal, Angola, the black liberation struggle in the US, Chile, questions of Marxist economic theory, etc. Under other circumstances, we would propose an exchange of publications with you. However, since we do not expect to remain an independent organization for very much longer, this would be relatively pointless. Instead, we are encouraging our comrades to subscribe to your publication, and we would urge you, in turn, to order a bulk order of our publications for your own members. I am enclosing a list of our publications for that purpose, should you choose to do so.

In the hope that you will respond to this letter, let us pose to you a few questions which you might be able to take up briefly.

1. What do you see as your course of further evolution?
2. What is your opinion of the USFI? What is your opinion of the IMG, the WSL and the IS(GB)?
3. Do you agree with T. Cliff's analysis of state capitalism? If not, could you indicate your principal differences? Especially, what is your appraisal of Cliff's views on permanent revolution (see, e.g., the articles in IS 61)?

Looking forward to your reply,

Communist greetings,

Fred Larson

Fred Larson,
for the National Committee
Revolutionary Marxist Committee

cc: USFI
SWP(US)
IMG(GB)