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July 13, 1978

Dear Comrades,

At its meeting of March 31-April 2, 1978, the United Secretariat approved a report by an ad hoc fact-finding commission it had designated to investigate disciplinary actions taken by the Lebanese section against two comrades, comrades Magida and Selim. You should have already received a copy of this report. At its July 4-6, 1978, meeting, the United Secretariat concurred with a proposal by the Lebanese section that its remarks on the report of the United Secretariat fact-finding commission be circulated to the same comrades who had received the report. It also concurred with the RCG's proposal to reverse the decision that two of its former members -- comrades Adnan and Nadira -- be included among those who should receive the report. We are therefore sending you the text of the remarks by the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Group.

Comradely,

Pola, for the United Secretariat Bureau

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REMARKS ABOUT THE REPORT OF THE FACT-FINDING COMMISSION  
CONCERNING THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST GROUP,  
SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL IN LEBANON

At the last meeting of the United Secretariat, two motions were adopted in light of the report given by Comrade Williams on behalf of the ad hoc fact-finding commission established by the Secretariat to examine the cases of two former members of the RCG. As we approve the main motion related to the cases of Magida and Selim and the section of the report dealing with these cases, which actually concurs with our own position, we find it necessary nevertheless to make the following remarks concerning the second motion and the section of the report dealing with the internal functioning of the RCG.

The Second Motion

The second motion adopted by the United Secretariat, on which Comrade Fourier alone abstained, "requests that the Lebanese section distribute copies of the report to its members and candidate members and to the three former members who gave evidence to the fact-finding commission, comrades Adnan, Paul, and Nadira."

While it is absolutely normal that the report should be distributed to the cell members of the section, the main point which required this second motion was obviously to request from our section that it give copies of the report to three of its former members. This decision was based on the oral report of Comrade Williams whose acquaintance with two of those former members does not exceed a single talk. In such a case, we find it a most irresponsible decision on the part of the United Secretariat to vote quasi unanimously (an automatic vote?) on this motion, without even knowing the opinion of the section about it. As a matter of fact, Comrade Paul excepted, our section strongly opposes giving the report to Adnan and Nadira. Adnan is indeed what may be called an "opponent" of our group, constantly speaking against it. He has joined recently a Mao-spontaneist grouplet. As for Nadira, she

is a most unstable person and has worked with several other groups. Despite the fact that she still "believes in Trotsky," she is totally unreliable to be given a report that can easily be used against us. We therefore have decided to appeal the motion referred to and shall not give the report to both former members pending a confirmation of the motion by a new vote from the United Secretariat (whose responsibility for the motion shall be total). The motion should be reversed; the United Secretariat committed an error by adopting it in its form. The correct decision would have been to ask the section to consider giving the report to those former members. It is entirely wrong to bind a section to give internal organizational documents to non-members of the Fourth International.

### The Internal Functioning of the RCG

We shall first point, in this regard, to the fact that the report, in many aspects, reads much more like an elementary course for beginners (sometimes even like moral advice to children) than like a report addressed to Trotskyist militants. Such lengthiness and such an elementarity could have been avoided.

This is not important, however. The main issue is the accusation stressed by the report that the RCG has not been functioning in a democratic manner and is still not functioning in this way. We shall deal here only with the main inaccuracies on which this assessment of Comrade Williams is based, in their order of appearance in the text of the report.

-- Comrade Williams writes a long paragraph (p. 10) alleging that the RCG leadership used a double standard in a disciplinary case charging three members of the RCG while "no investigation was made . . . of the alleged role of the Iraqi comrades in relation to the secret faction." There follow several lines of a course in civics for beginners on the theme: the law shall apply to everybody equally. . . . The fact of the matter is that the RCG leadership, at that time, voted a blame to the Iraqi comrade involved and requested that the group he belongs to discuss his behavior!

-- No candidate member was ever reduced to sympathizing status because of the university he chose. In point of fact, the person referred to was reduced to that status because he refused to register at the public university, saying that he wanted to give full priority to his academic life and thus could not undertake any political work in that university. While our section does not consider the question of studies a reason for reducing the status of any of its members, we think nevertheless that it is the duty of a tiny group to fix some priorities according to its political needs in relation to the place of study or work of its members wherever and whenever the choice is possible. We thus urge our comrades willing to go to university to follow courses at the public university, which is the only "popular" one in our country while the others are very expensive, foreign bourgeois private universities. The important matter is for the student comrade to register at the public university, while she or he remains free to register besides, for personal considerations, anywhere she or he likes to. To put it another way, any comrade assigned to a political task remains free to have in addition any activity she or he

wants, provided it does not contradict her or his status of revolutionary militant.

-- Concerning the question of people who leave a section in good standing and later go and live in another country and apply for membership in the section in that country, not only does the RCG not consider that they should be prevented from joining that section, but it has actually recommended the integration of such people in the French and Swedish sections when the case occurred. What we want to stress here is the necessity (which should be made clear in the statutes of the International if it is not) for the section which the applicant wants to join to ask the section from which the latter does come about her or him. The reason for this is obvious: the original section may have some important reasons (e.g., security matters) for refusing the integration of the applicant in the International.

-- The report explains in a lengthy manner elementary principles of democratic centralism to state finally that "this is not the way the RCG has been functioning." We think that this is a very serious accusation, not only for those among us who were members of the former leadership body but for all of us, having all participated in building this group for many years. The report alleges that "the inability of the leadership to organize adequate democratic discussion within the organization is the source of much of the frustration which some members have felt over the past years." We do not pretend that we were an ideally democratic group, nor that we are presently such a group. In fact, we believe that there is no ideal functioning but that there should be a permanent effort to better the democratic functioning of any revolutionary organization as far as possible. Nevertheless, we would like to point to a few facts.

The first congress of the RCG took place at the end of 1973. It was preceded by a four-month preparation period during which all comrades were invited to make proposals and counterproposals. Several issues of the internal bulletin were published (we do not recall their exact number because our archives were lost during the civil war); a minority tendency was set up and expressed its own views in the bulletin in the most democratic manner. Never did this tendency complain about any lack of democracy. After that congress, the bulletin remained open to all kind of contributions without restrictions. A few issues were published in 1974, before the civil war broke out the following year.

During the war, all conditions of political activity were completely transformed. We were involved in so many activities that it was hardly possible for us to produce the literature required. But democracy was not only practiced by members in the long discussions that were occurring within each of the two cells that existed, it was even extended to sympathizers: general assemblies of members and sympathizers were held more than once weekly to discuss every detail of our political line and every aspect of our external activity and of the organization of everyday life in our "barracks."

The report alleges that, at the CC meetings during the war, "no line of action was developed for the organization as a whole and no assessment made of the experiences of each cell." This is utterly untrue! It would be long to explain here the line of action that was developed and the assessments that were made regularly.

As for the "balance sheet" question, which is indeed over exaggerated, the matter of the fact is that the Shiyah cell as a whole (and not just two members of the CC) replied that it had nothing to say that would be better put in written form than orally, at that stage. It had just begun to undertake an organized political activity in its district, and thought that it was too early to draw a balance sheet of it. It asked the other cell to write down its assessment of its own experience, if it judged this to be useful, and to make any suggestion it has concerning the activity of the RCG as a whole. The Nabaa cell never wrote any such "balance sheet." It is just absurd to any former member of this cell to blame the other cell for not writing a "balance sheet" when the fact is that his cell never wrote any itself!

To conclude on this question of democratic discussion, we would say that any former member of the RCG who claims that she or he left it because it was not possible for her or him to express democratically her or his point of view is a liar! In fact, no one can state such an untruth. As for those who declare that they left the group because (or partially because) they saw no way to change its orientation, what they truly mean is that they felt unable to convince the majority of its members, or even of their cell, of their own point of view (if they ever had a clear point of view: actually, except the "secret faction" referred to in the report, no one of the former members of the RCG ever proposed any precise change in its orientation or its functioning; no one ever wrote any such proposal, even after leaving the group, assuming that it was not possible to write it inside, which is completely absurd!).

Anyway, this whole matter is totally irrelevant to the case of Magida and Selim, for a simple fact not mentioned in the report: they were 50% of the CC -- four members!!! How could they have been prevented from expressing democratically their point of view??? If they were really convinced of the charges they made in Paris (very serious charges, indeed!) they ought to have made it in Lebanon before they left. They ought to have asked for an international fact-finding commission long before they did, instead of asking for it after the RCG had opposed their participation in the so-called Central Arab Commission, several months after they arrived in Paris. This is pure opportunism, indeed!

-- The report alleges that a congress was to be held in 1977 and did not take place. This is totally wrong: it was never decided by anybody that a congress was to be held in 1977. The (printed) resolution of the last congress (extraordinary) of the RCG only decided that the next congress should be held before the next world congress of the Fourth International.

-- The internal bulletin (of which 9 issues were published in 1977 and 6 issues in 1978 up to now) is not only opened for contributions on organizational questions, but on all topics without restriction. The fact that the bulletin is produced now at a higher rate than in 1974, after the first congress, is due to the drastic change in the political conditions of the country and the activity of the RCG, which raised many issues to debate. It has nothing to do with the functioning of the group.

-- Concerning the problem of "nervous temperament," the report reaches the peak in "moral advice for children." In fact, never has any member of the RCG, whoever he is and whichever role

he plays, transgressed the bounds of political discussion, in form or content, without being blamed or asked to make a self-criticism by the body where the transgression occurred. The statement by Comrade Williams "that the leadership of the RCG has made errors in this respect" is utterly irrelevant. The current leadership of the RCG never said it made mistakes in this connection to say that it does not intend to repeat them, as stated by the report. But if what is meant by mistakes is the "nervous temperament" of some comrades which makes them get angry and shout on some occasions, then such "mistakes" occur very often in the highest bodies of the International. Some of the oldest, most experienced, and most influential comrades made such "mistakes" often. While we agree that it would be better for these "mistakes" not to occur, we think that full self-control is not an element of human nature. The danger is not that comrades have or don't have a "nervous temperament," but that they make shouting a way of leading. In our group, shouting has always been considered to discredit the comrade who shouts. No one of our comrades has ever been "impressed" or "convinced" by shouting; on the contrary, our comrades are very sensitive and opposed, as any normal Trotskyists, to any form of "intimidation" in political debates. This is a strong guarantee against any degeneration of the functioning of the organization.

-- In the same respect, we must emphasize the fact that there is nobody designated as "central leader" in our group. The very use of this formula in the report makes one feel that this is a concept that the report agrees with. For our part, we strongly protest against applying this designation to any member of our group: we have a central committee, an executive bureau, members of these bodies, but no "central leader" whatsoever. There is no such position in our group, nor in the International.

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To conclude, we should state that we did not find the report to be of any use at all to our group. It did not include any suggestion we could make use of in the part dealing with the RCG. If this was the aim of the reporter, i.e., to make such suggestions, then we must say that it was not achieved at all. While we agree almost totally with what Comrade Williams wrote about Selim and Magida, the Central Arab Commission, and the responsibility of the USec Bureau, we almost totally disagree with what she wrote about us. Not out of refusal of any criticism, but on the basis of facts, the facts that we listed above. Actually, the part of Comrade Williams' report dealing with the RCG is the only one containing inaccuracies. We do not know why Comrade Williams made such errors: she had every opportunity to ask us precise questions about the charges she made against us in her report. She would have thus avoided those mistakes. The fact is that she did not.

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Two leading members of the International came several times to Lebanon between 1972 and 1974, a member of each international tendency. They had the opportunity to meet all our comrades and to stay with us longer than did Comrade Williams. These comrades (Galois and Vergeat) never noticed, to our knowledge, that the RCG was not functioning in a democratic manner. Besides, Comrade Williams is raising charges that not a single present member of

the RCG considers to be true, and she knows that. This is really amazing, indeed! Does she really consider that the comrades she met in Beirut are so ignorant that they are unaware of the elementary principles of democratic centralism? We wonder . . .

Anyway, we would be happy to welcome any comrade, Comrade Williams included, who would like to get a clear idea of what is going on in our country and how the RCG is functioning.

Fraternally,

The Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Group,  
Section of the Fourth International in Lebanon

June 28, 1978

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#### PERSONAL STATEMENT BY JABER

I would like to add to the content of the CC resolution that I approve entirely a commentary on the section of the report dealing with "leadership of Arab work."

The report states the following: "On the specific issue of an error of judgement which was made in that a police agent was treated in all good faith as a comrade, Jaber recognizes that he made an error in this respect."

I never recognized that I made an "error" in this respect. An error is a behavior or a judgement that you do not repeat if you recognize it. I cannot say that should the same situation occur again, I shall behave differently. To call this type of question "errors" is absurd. Did the Bolsheviks make an "error" in keeping Malinovsky on their CC??? There is an error (rather difficult to make) when you keep treating somebody as a comrade despite proof you learned of concerning his collaboration with the police. There is an error also if you give dangerous information to somebody suspected, for earnest reasons, of collaboration with the police. I never made either of these two types of error.

There was no earnest reason to consider the person referred to as a police agent. He was a textile worker, communist since the fifties, jailed six years from 1958 to 1964, who had just been fired from his job for activity when other worker comrades recruited him (all these details are confirmed). In no way was it possible to suspect him. Actually, he has most probably been recruited by the police after we got in touch with him. The only warning we had concerning him was when, a few months after he began working with us, Stalinists accused him of being a police agent. We, i.e., all the comrades, Selim and Magida included, did not consider this to be a sufficient reason to cut relations with him. We kept secret, however, the only important information he could get from us, i.e., the existence of another group, the student one. I do not consider therefore to have made any error in this respect. Shall I cut all relations with comrades Hansen, Mandel, and Novack because Healyites affirm that they are GPU agents?

The report says also that "given the reservations and opposition which some members of the CC of the Lebanese section had to the visit to Beirut of the person who was later confirmed to be a police agent, it was incorrect for Jaber to go ahead with it." What I said above would be enough to answer this. Still, this phrase needs a special commentary.

1. Assuming that what it claims is true, it is rather a strange conception of organizational functioning to put a single person (myself) on the same level as "some members of the CC." Had this issue been discussed in the CC, a vote would have been taken. The error would have been, then, an error of the majority of the CC, not of any of its members alone.

2. No one ever expressed reservations and opposition to the visit. The only reservation was expressed by a comrade who is still a member of the present CC of the RCG, and not to the visit itself but to a meeting of Lebanese comrades to listen to a report given by the person referred to. The comrade was answered by the other members of the CC that there was no danger at all involved. They were right: the police agent could not get any information out of the meeting.

3. I was not in a position either "to go ahead" with the visit or to cancel it. In fact, this visit had been arranged by Sami, the Iraqi comrade, in January 1975, and took place in March. It was strictly impossible for anyone of us in Beirut to cancel it, even if the decision would have been taken.

JABER

June 28, 1978