

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
April 11, 1978

TO ORGANIZERS AND NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is a report on the recent split in the Revolutionary Communist Party. Comrades are encouraged to forward any similar reports to the National Office.

Comradely,

Betsy Stone

Betsy Stone
SWP National Office

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INFORMATION ON THE SPLIT IN THE RCP--
STATUS OF THE JARVIS FACTION

By Bill Breihan
Milwaukee

Milwaukee and New York City are the main centers of the Jarvis wing of the Revolutionary Communist Party. The new name of this faction is the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters (RWH). I have collected a considerable amount of information on the Jarvis tendency through my work with these people in miners support activities in recent weeks. I have a fairly extensive knowledge of the RCP (and RU) going back to 1969 when my best friend from high school joined RU. I've read the bulk of their publications and have assembled information concerning their activities since that time.

RCP pre-split membership was 800-1,000. In addition, there were 700 members in their youth group (RSB/RCYB), for a total of 1300-1500 (allowing for dual membership). RCP had branches in 12 cities where we have no presence; we have branches in 15 cities where they had no presence. RCP has also had a broad periphery of active supporters in many cities. In Milwaukee, New York-New Jersey, and the Bay Area, National United Workers Organization (NUWO) is a real organization with many non-party activists. This may be true in other cities as well. Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) is run by the RCP and has a membership which is considerably broader than RCP. African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) and Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee (UWOC) are other RCP dominated groups that have had, in many areas, a real layer of non-party activists who support the RCP. NUWO, UWOC, ALSC, and VVAW are all RCP "front groups". The many non-party activists in these organizations almost without exception look to the RCP for leadership. "Anti-party" tendencies in both VVAW and ALSC have been expelled.

Approximately 40% of RCP was expelled in January. They have yet to form a "new Communist Party" but their central leader in Milwaukee told me that a "communist consolidation" will take place shortly. The following RCP branches have gone with the Jarvis faction apparently in toto: Boston, Providence, Bridgeport, New York City, Jersey City, Trenton and Newark, New Jersey, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Louisville, Johnstown, Minneapolis, and Milwaukee. A large chunk of the Chicago and Gary branches also went with Jarvis. The situation in Buffalo and Rochester is still unclear. There are certainly a few other cities where Jarvis has supporters. The Jarvis faction (RWH) would appear to have 400 members plus one-half of the RCYB (now RSB) for a total of approximately 600-700. Roughly 50% of the RWH membership is concentrated in two metropolitan areas--Milwaukee and

(over)

New York-New Jersey. In Milwaukee the RWH is very strong. There are about 70 actual members of the RWH. Counting their active (activist) periphery it would appear that Jarvis has around 100 supporters in Milwaukee.

All the "front organizations" of RCP have split or are in the process of splitting along faction lines. (For split in NUWO cf. enclosed copy of "The Organizer.") Milwaukee is now the national headquarters of NUWO (Jarvis). Mike Rosen of Milwaukee was elected full-time national chairman of NUWO at its founding convention last September. Avakian and his goons physically expelled him from NUWO along with the rest of the Jarvis group at a recent national NUWO meeting. There are now two NUWOs, two UWOCs, two (or three?) ALSCs and soon two VVAWs.

The main political issue separating the Avakian and Jarvis factions is, of course, the question of China. I have no new information on this since no RWHer is willing to really talk "politics" with us. There are also differences of method between the two factions (cf. debate around character of youth organization). RU/RCP groupings that have split from the organization in years past (Steve Hamilton's Bay Area Communist Union, the Detroit Marxist-Leninist grouping) have criticized Avakian for carrying out a "PLification" of RU/RCP. It does seem that the "Avakianites" are on the same road of political degeneracy travelled by PLP in the early seventies--mad adventurism and ultraleftism, political violence and hooliganism, etc. Compared with the Avakianites, the Jarvis faction is really quite mild. Their Milwaukee people have softened up quite a bit since the split. They are much friendlier to us on the personal level. They have invited some of us to a number of their political events. The independents in the miners' support coalition all agree that they have never seen the NUWO people so flexible and cooperative.

The Milwaukee Jarvisites seem to be quite relieved to have Avakian off their backs. They have condemned the Avakian people for their political terrorism. (A number of their people have been assaulted by the Avakianites.) The editor of the Milwaukee Worker, their local paper, has even called them "goons" for their attack on the Houston miners meeting. We've been able to sell them a number of Militants and are planning to approach them for an endorsement of the 'Houston appeal' against violence. Though less "crazy" than the Avakianites and less prone to violence, we do not really hold illusions about these people. They have not in any real sense broken from their past Maoist-Stalinist methods. But some real changes are underway in their organization. We will continue to keep our ear to the ground.

The RWH is a large organization in Milwaukee. They have a large active periphery. In some cities they have in their ranks and around them many serious and well meaning anti-imperialist youth (as Les Evans correctly pointed out in a Militant article a year or so ago.) In Milwaukee, we have found ourselves working

with them in various coalitions in the past (Steelworkers Fight Back, South Africa solidarity, anti-Nazi work, mine workers solidarity) because of their broad influence. Our branch has attempted to work out an approach to their membership, part of which appears quite "soft." They have never really baited us in these coalitions and are willing to work with "Trotskyites" (though not always enthusiastically). I have also had members of their organization over to my house to discuss politics and socialize.

Concerning RCP's industrial fractions (the various "sections" of NUWO): Before the split RCP was probably the strongest left tendency in the auto industry claiming members in 22 auto plants. In steel, their fraction was about the same size as ours. In the electrical industry, their biggest industrial concentration, they were probably in the process of outstripping the CP. In the coal fields they were the only left tendency with any serious presence. (The CP has a few; CPml has a couple of miners in Charleston, W.V.). RCP also had modest implantation in garment, longshore, meatpacking, and other industries. They published national newspapers for each of these industries: Steelworker, Autoworkers United to Fight, Garment Worker, Packinghouse Worker, etc. At the founding convention of NUWO in September, 1977, 1438 people registered including 200 electrical workers, 130 steelworkers, and 150 autoworkers (figures from Milwaukee Worker, September, 1977). These figures are roughly accurate. They did (and do) have quite a base in a number of industries. In Milwaukee, for example, virtually their entire membership is in basic industry. The only exceptions are their full-timers (3 or 4), a few unemployed, and a number of women assigned to be "workers' wives". Working in industry is apparently a condition of membership. No comrade in our branch could think of a single member of RWH (excluding the above exceptions) who is not an industrial worker. RCP (and RWH) claim that white collar workers and most service workers are part of the petty-bourgeoisie. The Draft Program of the RCP (1975) noted that teachers play the same role in society as cops and prison guards. There are no teachers or service workers (AFSCME, etc.) in the Milwaukee RWH.

The split in RCP has resulted in the breakup of these large industrial concentrations. Examples:

(1) Coal mining. The RCP miners in Ohio and West Virginia went with the Avakian group. This includes all the top leaders

and spokespersons for the Miners Right to Strike Committee-- O.V. Hirsch, Skip Delano, Bruce Miller. (Hirsch and Delano have been on national news a couple of times during the strike. Both were well known local strike leaders during the 1975 and 1977 wildcats.) The RCP miners in Johnstown, Pa.--only two of them-- are with the Jarvis faction.

(2) Auto. The overwhelming majority of the NUWO auto section went with Avakian group. The only sizable groups of RCP autoworkers to go with Jarvis are in Milwaukee and New Jersey. Probably 80% of the party's auto fraction is still with Avakian.

(3) Steel. A small majority of NUWO's steel section is with the Jarvis group. This includes the Steelworker newspaper still published in Baltimore, but now by the RWH. Much of RCP's biggest concentrations of steelworkers are in the Jarvis camp: Pittsburgh, Gary, Baltimore, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Milwaukee. But many are still in the RCP: the West Coast, Birmingham, Cleveland, Chicago. It is much closer to an even split in steel than in auto.

(4) Electrical. The majority is clearly with Avakian, but a sizable minority went with Jarvis (Boston, Louisville, Chicago, and elsewhere.)

More information will be forwarded as collected.

March 24, 1978.

cc: Wendy L.