

X6; Jack, Joe, Doug, M-A, Larry, B/C, Gus

APR 3 1978

28 March 1978

Dear Gus,

The enclosed lnnng delayed letter to the SWP PC on International is self- explanatory. The letter to me from the local WRP branch is for your amusement - and Joe's. Don't publish it however as it will just lead to a needless hassle. The 'COPY' at the top is by the WRP member so I assume the original is with the leader of Clapham common,

Regards

John

APR 3 1978

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**INTERNATIONAL  
IMG  
MARXIST GROUP**

P.O. Box 50 London N.1 2XP

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28 March 1978

Dear Comrades,

We apologise for the long delay in following up the discussions between comrades Barnes and Hansen and Grogan and Ross concerning International. We also acknowledge cde Barnes' letter of 14 December 1977 and cde Horowitz' of 8 February 1978.

Our delay in replying following our discussions and your letters was due to the fact that our Political Committee decided to look comprehensively at the question of International. This was necessary both because of the present stage of the journal and because we thought that nothing would be worse than to agree on some project of collaboration on which there was any misunderstanding. An error on this might lead to both financial and political setbacks in which people thought they had agreed one thing but were in fact presented with another. This would lead not to collaboration but to considerable heat. We therefore wanted to think through our proposals carefully and put them in the most objective and comprehensive form possible.

The possibilities

In making our proposals we would start off by summarising the situation as we understand it following our various discussions with cdes Barnes, Hansen, and Sheppard.

1. The IMG is in the process of stabilising and expanding its theoretical journal. While this has a particular orientation and primary market in Britain nevertheless the common theoretical framework and internationalist perspective which the IMG shares with the other organisations politically supporting the Fourth International means that this journal carries material of interest in other countries - including the United States. International therefore in any case has a small potential market for sales in other countries. The question is whether this market is a few tens of copies, which of course we are interested in maximising through circulation of Trotskyist bookshops and branches, or whether, with some suitable steps in the journal, a somewhat more substantial market exists. If this latter is the case then obviously the IMG has every interest in tapping it and the theoretical resources it

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International Marxist Group, British section of the Fourth International.

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would make available.

2. The SWP does not at present have a separate theoretical journal and resources do not permit of a short term project for launching one. This means that the cdes of the SWP have an interest in finding an outlet for theoretical work being carried out as this does not always fit easily into either the present ISR magazine or ICP format. Furthermore the cdes of the SWP have an interest in a journal which would carry not only their own output but also the type of theoretical work being done in the various sections of the Fourth International. They also consider both that at least a certain amount of the material carried in International would be useful to them and that the types of material they would want to put in such a journal would be of interest to cdes in other countries.

3. This combination of circumstances of the IMG and the SWP makes it worth investigating whether there would be mutual benefit in some form of collaboration between the two organisations, and possibly others, around International.

#### The problems

Within the framework we have outlined above the one issue which seems to us to be a serious problem is the tension between a national and an international journal.

It is evident that any theoretical journal even of a national section would carry a tremendous amount of material on theoretical issues and international questions - as Marxists we know that the programme even of a national section has its origin in world politics. Nevertheless there is a difference between a journal of a national section and an international journal. A journal of a national section has to deal much more extensively with the specific combination of the elements of that international process in its own state. Thus for example in the case of Britain we need to look not only at the general development of the bourgeois state but its specific form in Britain, not only the general development of Eurocommunism but the specific instance of the CPGB, not merely trade unions in general but the concrete case of the British unions. Obviously the same process applies in the United States with the AFL-CIO and unions in general, the particular form of the US state, the particular development of the national question. These considerations mean that while there is considerable overlap between an international and a national journal nevertheless the two are not the same thing.

The ideal solution to the problem outlined would of course be for all the organisations politically supporting the Fourth International to have their own strong national theoretical journals and at the same time for an international English language theoretical journal of the FI to exist. We

assume therefore that it is the intention of the SWP at some point in time to re-establish ISR as a separate theoretical magazine and certainly the IMG wishes to have its own such journal. Both the SWP and the IMG, with other English language sections of the FI, would hopefully also be able to collaborate on an international journal.

At the present time however the material resources do not exist for the IMG to put out both a national journal and an international one. We therefore have to take a choice.

#### Which journal

We considered seriously on our PC the question of putting out a journal which was an English language journal of the supporters of the FI in a full sense i.e. not specifically geared at all to the market and politics of Britain. There are however in our opinion two absolutely insuperable obstacles to this.

(i) Financial. To break even financially, with the full time editor we need for a regular substantial journal, we need the profit on a sale of 3000. We should be able to aim to achieve this on the British market alone. On a fully international journal however we couldn't guarantee to sell anything remotely resembling this <sup>in Britain</sup> - 1000 would be more realistic. There is no guarantee, or even likelihood, that the deficit could be made up by international sales. Without a substantial subsidy, which we do not have to give it, the project would simply collapse financially. The whole financial base of International rests on maintaining and expanding the sales in Britain.

(ii) Political. We very much need a journal which can tap the quite considerable interest in Britain for theoretical material - journals such as New Left Review sell circa 5,500 in Britain, the journal of the Conference of Socialist Economists sells around 3,000 etc - and if we don't move in on this we are handing a major opportunity over to the Communist Party, IS/SWP, assorted centrists etc. Such a situation would have very bad implications for us in the short and long run. It is therefore important that we maintain a journal which can tap the British market.

Therefore the IMG cannot at present launch a magazine which would be a pure international theoretical journal of the political supporters of the FI.

#### Our project

The situation we have outlined obviously indicates the limits of what is practical in terms of collaboration with the SWP - or other English language political supporters of the Fourth International. Obviously with a journal which had to tap the British market we would think that sales internationally would be more restricted than a specifically international journal. The question is whether, with the limitations outlined, the cdes of

the SWP would find it useful to collaborate in a project around International in such a way as to give an outlet for their material and to of use to them in some modest circulation in United States. To allow the SWP to answer this the best way is to indicate how we see the character and development of International.

The way we essentially want to develop International in the next period is as a journal having as its framework questions of political strategy - in particular strategy in the advanced capitalist countries. This obviously doesn't mean that other questions - for example philosophy, economics, or culture - wouldn't be dealt with but that the centre of weight of the journal would be on politics. Therefore the types of issues we would see as central in the journal would be the relation of bourgeois democracy to socialist revolution; forms of the bourgeois state; Eastern Europe and the fight for socialist democracy; the national question; the struggle for women's liberation; black nationalism and the struggle of immigrant workers; the nature and development of the Social Democratic and Stalinist parties; policy in the mass organisations of the working class such as the trade unions; the latest developments in imperialism and capitalism and their consequences for politics; the revolutionary party; revolutionary strategy as contrasted to that of reformism and centrism both in theory and in the practice of organisations. Within this framework we would see as a key task making available the best material being produced within the FI and its supporters on these issues of strategy. Therefore we would see the journal as drawing on Critique Communiste, Critique de L'Economie Politique, as well as writings of the cdes of the SWP and our own output.

To give some concrete idea of the way we would like to see the journal develop, we would like to draw heavily on articles of Critique Communiste on the development of the mass Communist Parties; articles of Bensaïd and others on the relation of 'new' theories of centrism and Eurocommunism to currents such as Austro-Marxism and Kautskyism; cde Gustavson on Social Democracy; writings of cdes Novack, Blackburn, Geras and others on bourgeois democracy; material of Quebec, Canadian, Scottish, Spanish, Basque, cdes, as well as that of cde Breitman and others, on the national question; writings of various SWP, British, French and other cdes on women's liberation; polemics on philosophy and politics such as that of cde Novack on Timpanaro and Colletti etc.

Within this framework we would think it important to organise some international debates on key questions which lead to strategic conclusions - for example cde Reed and various French cdes on origins and development of the oppression of women, cdes Novack, Lowy, Ross et al on Lukacs and ultra-leftism, various positions on organisation and the theory of the party etc.

Finally there is no doubt who constitutes for us the chief theoretical

opponent. This is the Eurocommunist theoreticians - and to a lesser extent the type of left reformist and centrist trends that are emerging in the Social Democracy. This is not to say of course that other currents do not present us with problems ( e.g. Healyites, extreme pro-Moscow Stalinists etc) but none of these are a serious force on the specifically theoretical front and are not attractive to independent forces. The theoretical work of the Eurocommunists however is attractive to significant layers. Therefore within a context of/discussion on political strategy we want a particular emphasis of discussion and polemic with the Eurocommunists of the type we started in Cammiller's article on the Popular Front in International Vol 3 no.3, the Blackburn-Geoff Roberts debate on Trotskyism and Eurocommunist policies on bourgeois democracy and workers government in Vol 3 no.4, in the interview and polemic on Poulantzas in Vol4 no.s 1 & 2.

We would see the specific analysis, and development of programme, we want to make on Britain as developing precisely out of these types of analyses, polemics, and discussions.

#### Technical

In addition to the political framework we have outlined it is probably also useful to indicate where the IMG stands in the technical development of International. This will help clarify our perspectives and indicate some possible subsidiary problems.

1. We have now completed one year of regularised production of International. This has been a definite step forward. However since cde Tariq Ali moved from International to edit Socialist Challenge the journal has not had a sufficiently clear direction i.e. the individual articles are good but not enough long term planning has gone into the shape of the journal as a whole. We therefore intend to appoint a full time editor. This will probably be cde John Ross.
2. We want to shift from 4 times a year publication to 6 times a year. This would enable us to decrease the size, and price, of each issue, but allow us to get out more pages a year. At present we run 4 issues of 64 pages - 256 pages a year ( 260,000 words). Six issues of 48 pages would give us 288 pages (290,000 words). The decrease in price is important for sales we think and also for 'availability' of the journal to readers.
3. As indicated above we want to start using International to make systematically available the theoretical material being produced in the FI by both translations ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> republishing basic material which either the IMG membership and those around us are not familiar with or which never had a major distribution in Britain. For these purposes we are taking steps to increase our translation facilities and build up projects of material we want to bring out in future.
4. We have built up a certain periphery in Britain of forces close to the IMG

but who are not members but who would strengthen the journal - rather like the situation we had with cdes Blackburn, Hoare and Magas before they joined the organisation. While maintaining a clear IMG majority on the editorial board we want to include some of these forces on the board. The types of forces involved are those we have a clear short term perspective towards recruiting or fusing with (e.g. supporters of Harry Wicks organisation, one or two people we work with regularly in the Conference of Socialist Economists).

### Proposals

Flowing from the outline above there seem two possibilities for the relations of the IMG and the SWP on International. The first is that the SWP considers that this type of journal would not find a market in the United States - or does not fit what the SWP itself needs. In that case we would simply request that all SWP branches and bookshops know of the existence of the journal - as obviously there will be some individuals interested in it. We will of course consider printing any individual articles the SWP cdes might think suitable for International - although obviously we will have to judge this in relation to our needs in Britain. On this arrangement obviously it would not be worth having structural collaboration via an editorial board involving SWP cdes.

The second possibility would be that the cdes of the SWP considered that the type of journal we have outlined would be both a useful outlet for various of their theoretical output and that it would be a journal with some audience at least among the cadres of the SWP and parts of its close periphery. Under these circumstances it would be obvious that the SWP would want some participation in the editorial board, it would be an obligation of the editorial board as a whole to ensure that output of the SWP went into the journal, we would work out technical problems, design etc so as to attempt best to meet the British and US markets etc. To make this worthwhile as far as the IMG is concerned we would not be talking of sales of the US of thousands but of some hundreds rather than tens.

The first of these two options could obviously be sorted out relatively easily so we don't go into it here. We therefore concentrate here on proposals, and some problems, on any more extensive form of collaboration.

1. The most fundamental question is the type of political project of the journal. For our needs and the British market we definitely need a journal centred on political strategy of the type outlined. While all sorts of adjustments can be made within this framework we would have to have agreement on the basic project for any collaboration to work. There did seem to be some agreement with cdes Barnes and Hansen on the themes involved but we would like any more detailed comments you have.

2. There may be a problem for the US in the fact of concentrating polemics

on the Eurocommunists given that this organised current is not significant in the CP in the United States. However we do not think that this difficulty would be too great as the problems of political strategy we would take up are of general interest and we would suggest that in the future Eurocommunist type arguments will be taken up by various forces in the US.

3. There might be some problem over the amount and scope of polemic and discussions. Our experience in Britain is that wideranging polemics and discussions on issues of general interest considerably increase sales and are extremely informative and educative. We particularly think that there is scope for this in a theoretical journal. Our attitude is to print material which is well thought out even where we disagree with it - and then write better replies. We definitely need wide discussions for the British market. There may be some difference with SWP practice on this.

4. There may be a question about the participation of non-members of the FI on the editorial board. We point out that there is no question of the IMG not having a majority but there have been differences with the cdes of the SWP on this question before. We consider it important to draw in forces moving towards us and in any case of course it would be open to the SWP to reply to any material they disagreed with.

5. The stickiest problem, as we have noted, seems to us to be the relation between national and international tasks of the journal. We would propose to tackle this along the following lines

(a) If US sales accounted for a significant part of the circulation we could run material specifically oriented to the US, and not directly so useful in Britain, which would increase the journals attractiveness in this market.

(b) We would try to take all possible editing and technical steps to allow sales in both countries.

(c) A cde(s) of the SWP would be on the editorial board. This would aim to get the best possible political collaboration, try to get the best balance, and to help in the direction of the journal politically.

(d) We think relations could be clarified by putting a definite timescale for the project of collaboration. In the initial period we do not think that there would be a terribly serious problem of the journal being too British oriented, and not dealing enough with general theoretical and international questions, to be useful to the SWP. The IMG does not have the long history and continuity of the SWP and therefore nothing like the depth of cadres - indeed precisely one of the key roles of International for us is to widen this cadre layer. Therefore, while we would be obviously carrying articles, book reviews, polemics etc on Britain, we would initially be drawing very heavily



on international material and the general theoretical cadres we have. The tension between international and national tasks would develop as, hopefully, we developed a wider layer of cadres. At a certain point the tension between the international aspect and the British one would be too great to be combined in a single journal.

We would propose that this problem be clearly recognised by putting a timescale on the collaboration - we would suggest initially two years. The situation could of course be reviewed as time went on. Hopefully by this point in time English language supporters of the FI might have sufficient resources to put out a fully international theoretical equivalent to ICP/Inprecor. Also probably after that period of time the SWP might well be considering launching ISR against as an independent publication in the United States.

### Summary

We would therefore summarise the proposals we put forward as a basis for discussion on any collaboration as follows.

1. The theoretical journal would centre on political strategy as outlined.
2. The IMG would take full technical responsibility for the production of the journal. The SWP would however put cdes on the editorial board - we would suggest perhaps a cde in Europe to function on the board regularly and a couple of Party leaders as consulting editors or to attend meetings if in Europe.
3. In addition to theoretical and international material useful in both countries we would guarantee the journal carried material specifically aimed at the US market - the amount depending on what type of proportion of total sales were accounted for by the US.
4. The aim would be an audience in the US of cadres and close periphery of the SWP - you would have a better judgement on the figures than us but we would consider realistic to make the project function a starting point of around 500.
5. In order to launch the project information concerning the journal, copies of present issues etc would be put into the United States now but we would launch the journal on a collaborative basis from the September issue - perhaps with Oberlin being a good place to get US subs.

If there was agreement around these basic outlines then we could get down rapidly to planning the initial issues, dealing with technical points, deciding pricing in the USA, working out the best methods of shipping etc.

We apologise once more for the long delay

*John Ross*

For the IMG Political Committee

1014

13th March 1918.

Dear Mr Ross,

Please find enclosed 50p -  
owed to you for News Line.

In view of the very deep differences both  
theoretical and political, between the W.R.P.  
and the IMGT, not least over the question of  
Security and the Fourth International and  
the questions relating to Trotsky's assassination,  
we are not prepared to deliver News Line  
to you personally, and would not have  
agreed to do so, had we been made aware  
at the time, that you are a leading member  
of the IMGT.

If however, you do wish to take  
News Line, we suggest you take out a  
postal subscription, a form is available  
in the paper, and News Line can also be  
obtained at our bookshops.

Yours

G. Robertson -

W.R.P. Anson Grove Branch