

xs:Gus, M-A, Joe, Doug, Jack, B/C, P/C

[TYPED COPY]

May 10, 1978

TO: United Secretariat Bureau

Copy to: H.K., Sakai

Dear Comrades,

During my stay in Hong Kong, I had to discuss with RCP, YSG, and RML comrades separately, to make a report on the situation in the international and to assist to a general discussion on the fusion question. I want to summarize here the information I was given and my opinion on the fusion question. I want to do it in this letter, without waiting for my return to Europe, because I think that both the prospects for a quick fusion are better than ever in the past, and that there are still some obstacles that should be--and could be--finally removed, to realize a full and quick fusion of all Trotskyist forces in Hong Kong.

I beg your pardon, both for my English and my handwriting.

I also want in this letter to again make clear, in a written form, the imbalance [?] we gave today in the international for the finalization of fusion processes ongoing in several countries and what is my opinion on the present situation in Hong Kong. Two questions I tried to make already clear in our previous discussions here. I asked to be given, if possible, English written statements from each component of the fusion process to be sent to the United Secretariat Bureau, attached to this report and for its information. It has not been possible. But if one feels the need to complement this report or to discuss some of its arguments or conclusion, he should send letters or contributions to the United Secretariat Bureau.

I. Favorable Prospects for an Overall Fusion

A. HONG KONG SITUATION

It is the fourth time I stopped in Hong Kong and discuss with everybody the fusion questions, in a period of five years. One thing appeared very clearly to me, we have never been in so favorable a situation to realize an overall and quick fusion. I do not say, of course, that no obstacles are existing for such a fusion. Of course they exist, the contrary would be rather strange after years of divisions! But I think none of those obstacles, if seriously answered, are of a nature to postpone a full fusion-- I shall come back later on this question.

The change in the Chinese situation had some deep effects on our possibilities. First, even if divergences on the interpretation of the Third Chinese revolution and on the history of the Chinese Trotskyist movement remains very big, those divergences relating to what to do toward the Chinese question are really narrowing and this is key. Secondly, because we are the only political current active in H.K. and able to give answers about what is happening in China, our political place is now here central in far-left milieus. Third, it helped us to overcome some of the gravest crises we knew before-- namely the one of the RML, in 1976-77,--and to turn toward external propaganda and activities (symptomatic of this is the last summer far-left symposium we politically dominated). Fourth, it helped us to extend our mass contacts and our possibilities of mass work (in this respect, for example, the situation is qualitatively better than 2 or 3 years ago). Fifth, it's open broad prospects of work as well in Hong Kong, as toward South China (Canton) and Southeast Asia.

This is a very summarized report on the change of the situation here, which should be substantiated with more information that I cannot give in this letter. But the implications of these changes for the fusion possibilities are deep and obvious--we can finalize a fusion on a stronger political base, we can base the fusion on actual work of intervention in a situation where we can take initiatives, we can consolidate the fusion by the consciousness of the future possibilities of work now opening and on the conviction that fusion is necessary for us to be able to fulfill our new and future tasks, etc.

Finally, I must say that the fusion is today more easy to realize because the younger generation of militants have matured politically, through several crises, and have understood the importance of this question is a deeper way than in previous years.

B. THE NEW SITUATION IN THE F.I.

The prospects for a full and quick fusion are all the more favorable because of the turn in the International internal situation.

In my report on this question, I have underlined the consistency of this turn--the dissolution of the I/TF and the IMT are not only a "reasonable" move and are not--we are all convinced of this-- a maneuverist move. It is a political turn in the situation, prepared by the evolution of the objective situation in several countries and regions (as it is the case in HK with the Chinese question) and prepared by political evolution of tendencies, bodies of the International or sections (as shown by the IMT Self-Criticism on Latin America, the ongoing discussions in Europe, the break of the I/TF, the SWP-USA turn toward factory work in answer to the evolving situation in USA, etc.).

This should be well taken into account to understand the objectives, the goals, we are now fighting for. We want, in the framework of the 11th World Congress, both to clarify politically what is the present state of agreements and what are the remaining political divergences in the F.I. and to overpass in the same move the organizational divisions of the F.I. ranks.

We have already advanced a lot in this direction. Several important documents have been unanimously (or nearly unanimously) adopted by the USec (the Socialist Democracy document, the one on 'Eurocommunism' prepared for the discussion with the OCRFI, the women draft [resolution] for the next world congress--with one remaining problem). In the framework of the preparation of the world congress, several other main documents are in preparation, and we are testing the possibilities of agreements on them (world situation draft for the world congress, Latin American draft, European draft...).

The [functioning] of the center has been greatly improved, as a day to day collective leadership, and does not depend on past-tendencies lines and borders. In many countries, national divisions of FI ranks have been overpassed (in totality or in big majority) Spain, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Greece... These fusion processes have been key for our development of several very important regions or countries (Central America and northern part of South America, Spain). It has also helped to change the internal climate of several other sections torn by tendency fights.

Of course, many difficulties remain. The main one is the links of the past that, up to my departure from Europe, the T.B. had not yet integrated this move. So the difficulties in the fusion process in Colombia and Peru, and other countries. Also, in some national

sections, internal tendency climate is remaining. But three things should be very clear:

a) The main characteristic of the new situation in the F.I. is this turn toward a new political homogeneity and normalization of the organizational functioning and not the remaining problems..

b) In each country where our forces are still divided, the only responsible attitude is to back [base ourselves on] on this international turn to help advance our local work, and not to stay on a defeatist attitude, enumerating the existing remaining problems. It is especially true in H.K. where some comrades complained about the effects of the international tendency and faction fights effects on our local situation. It is certain that this international abnormal situation, we have passed through in the last 8 years, have objectively made more difficult the regroupment of all Trotskyist forces in H.K. The only possible condensation of this is that the new situation help this regroupment to finally occur!

c) We (USec) shall do all that we can to finally normalize the organizational situation of the F.I. at the 11th World Congress. This implies to be in a position to elect the best possible leadership and to build the best possible collective framework of work in the F.I. It also implies that after the 11th World Congress the national and local divided situations are overcome, and that in each country we find ourselves with only one section. We are devoting a lot of our attention on this question. It is a systematic policy of the center to improve our collective capacity of work on leadership level and to realize real fusions everywhere where our forces are divided. It is true for every country.

What makes the prospect for a full and quick fusion in H.K. so favorable is the combination between the local evolution of our situation and the recent turn in the F.I. This chance-- which is without precedent here I think -- must be taken.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FUSION

To lose the possibility of quick and full fusion would be very grave in H.K.--as well as fail in our goals for the 11th World Congress for the F.I. I insisted on the turn in the F.I. and its meaning because of some remarks of some members of the CC of the RCP which make me think that they did not fully understand it. I specifically think of [am referring to?] Fong's remarks about the division of the "Trotskyist movement" in countries like France or Great Britain, and about the remaining divided situation in the FI. Two things must be clear: the division of the so-called "Trotskyist movement" (including in Fong's words in France, the ICR, LC,OCI, and OCT) has nothing to do with the H.K. situation. In France, apart from our section (the ICR), the three other organizations do not recognize the framework of the F.I. -- and even one of them does not claim to be Trotskyist (the OCT). We are here faced with a longterm problem-- the division of the far left. But in H.K. we are faced with the divisions of forces claiming all to recognize the framework of the F.I., and both the RCP and RML has recognized the other organization as Trotskyists which should be included in a fusion. And secondly, remaining divided situations of our forces should not be taken as a "example" valid for H.K., or as a pretense to slow down the fusion process. H.K. is in a much better situation to fuse than in some other cases--even than some other cases where the fusion has taken place, and very successfully.

I feel that the key question here is to well understand the importance of a full and quick fusion.

Neither the RCP as such, nor the RML as such, and of course nor the YSG as such, can fully answer our new and future tasks (in H.K., toward China, and SEA). We need to regroup all our forces and to build

a wider collective leadership to be able to operate on all the necessary grounds and to divide among ourselves the tasks and responsibilities.

In all countries, division of F.I. forces has been used by our concurrents and opponents. The damage of such division is all the more obvious in a "town-country" like H.K., where we are facing the Maoist establishment and where we have to combat a deep deformation of the conception of democratic centralism. How to convince [others] of our conception of democratic centralism if we are even not able to fuse and regroup our present forces? How to educate new layers to this conception--and our own militants?

It has been confirmed, and confirmed again, that the capacity to overcome our divisions and to restore a united organization and work is a very important test of political maturity for organizations. It is true for the F.I.: we have to take the change in the new situation to educate our militants in a framework other than the one of tendency and faction bitter fights. It is true for the national and local organizations: we have to prove in practice that we are able to build organizations in which a collective work can be developed in spite of unavoidable difference of generations, individual characters, and political experiences. If not, we shall never be able to build a mass based International and parties!!!

Fusion is also necessary if we want to improve the relationship between the center and our H.K. work. It is the fourth time I came to H.K. and each time, most of the collective discussions we could have turned around the organizational situation and the fusion problem! It is very frustrating for everybody and it gave a very poor idea of what is the function of an international. Because it

is true not only of my trips, but also of other comrades trips and of the written exchange between the center and H.K.

The normalization of the organizational situation specifically in the new F.I. context is a pre-condition to really change this ugly situation. We need to discuss fully a lot of other matters: Chinese crisis, H.K. work, Southeast Asia regional work, political general documents like the Socialist Democracy one--the F.I. leaderships must be in a position to learn more about all this and your activities, you must integrate yourself more in our international life and our regional work. If not, internationalism will be felt as much too formal. We have to ameliorate the collective functioning of the center for this. But the organizational situation in H.K. must be normalized also.

One must state clearly today that our main present task, our most urgent responsibility is to regroup all our rank-and-file and leadership capacities, all Trotskyist militants and forces, as quickly as possible to be able to answer and fulfill our new tasks and responsibilities.

This must be the starting point of our approach to the fusion process. Any difficulties must be taken within this framework: the question is how to solve them. And I am convinced it is possible to solve those existing difficulties.

III. NATURE OF THE DIFFICULTIES

Many difficulties remain, of course, on the path of the fusion. RML, majority of the CC of the RCP comrades, minority of the RCP comrades, all comrades, pinpoint some difficulties, even if in different frameworks. Also, several members of the majority of the RCP said I was loudly speaking for fusion but I was not understanding the nature of the difficulties and I was giving no concrete answers

to the concrete problems they were underlining. Better not to escape real problems and not draw a rosy picture, hiding effective difficulties, if you want a real fusion was the conclusion. I do not think this approach is efficient. So I shall try to be clear in this report on how I see the nature of the difficulties and the concrete answers we can give to them.

A. NATURE OF THE FUSION

Several CC majority RCP members put in question the nature of the fusion, the USec Bureau was foreseeing. One of them said that all previous splits occurred as a direct result of F.I. division and clearly implied that members of the center encouraged them. Several CC RCP members more specifically accuse namely Jim, of a factional work with the RCP minority, aiming at a split in the RCP and a separate fusion with the RML.

Two things should be here very clear:

a) The situation of the FI in the past period made more difficult regroupment processes in H.K. But, none of the departures and splits was even "organized" by members of the center. If Wu, then Johnny and today Yip Nin and Cheung-Kwai began to oppose the RCP CC majority, it is for another type of reason than a series of machiavellian interventions of USec Bureau members or IEC members! The successive oppositions which appeared between the older and younger generations of comrades are posing another type of problem: how to unify on the longterm these different political generations in one same organization? Several examples show that it is possible, and it is exactly what we are trying to do presently.

b) we fight for an overall, full, quick, simultaneous fusion of all Trotskyist forces in H.K. It means a fusion between the RML and the RCP fully involving former members of the Chinese IWP and YSG comrades. We seek for this overall fusion process--as we were seeking for it a few years ago at a time when the RCP CC was only seeking for the reunification with individuals (Wu, Wang, ?) and not with organizations (like the SL [Socialist League]) or currents. We have not changed our approach for all the reasons enumerated in Part I and II.

B. PROGRAMATIC BASE FOR A FUSION

Everybody recognizes that everybody has its place in the F.I. Both the RML and the RCP recognizes one another as Trotskyist organizations. So there should be no principled programmatic obstacle for fusion.

Between November 1977 and February 1978, a clarification discussion was organized on this question, and the general opinion I was expressed [told] is that this discussion confirmed the existence of broad, principled programmatic basis for a fusion.

On this question, some members of the RCP CC majority said that there might be some remaining important differences, while recognizing that some of the past divergencies on the present situation in China has narrowed. They specifically pinpointed the fact that divergencies existed on the analysis of the third Chinese revolution, and the history of our movement during it, and on the present stage of evolution of the agricultural and peasant situation (divergences which seem to lead to differences of opinion on the slogans we should raise toward the agricultural problem).

I do not think that those type of divergencies should harm the

the fusion process. It is quite possible to continue the discussion on those issues in a common organization. I would even suggest that a public discussion could be organized in our press on those questions, with discussion articles and documents from our past activities and from the F.I. resolutions on China.

C. "PARTY-YOUTH" AND DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

The main obstacle for fusion, in the eyes of the RCP CC majority is the very crisis of the RCP itself. This crisis oppose the RCP majority and the RCP minority. The RCP CC majority feels that the minority is now acting quite independently in its youth work, and that decisions like the absorption of the former RCY into the YSG was taken against the will of the CC majority. The minority argue that there were some compromises built in the recent past which is now forgotten. But they recognize the existence of the problem. They just argue that the very existence of the problem is due to the complete inability of the CC majority to politically lead the youth work and the replacement by the CC majority of political leadership by administrative leadership.

In the eyes of the RCP CC majority, the situation is extremely grave. It is a de facto split, which can lead soon to a formal split and the transformation of the YSG into a third organization in H.K., competing with both the RCP and the RML.

In consequence, they have decided the convocation of an extraordinary convention in early August. For them, the RCP crisis touches a principled question (i.e., democratic centralism), so this

crisis of the RCP must be settled before the fusion as a guarantee on the future functioning of this common organization. They argue that the convention will give a chance to the minority to gain the majority. If not, then democratic centralism will have to be applied, or there shall be an open split situation. The question to clarify first, in their eyes, is the "party-youth" relationship.

So the August convention should have two points on its agenda: a) Party-youth question; b) fusion.

I must say first that I am very afraid of the dynamic implied by this approach of the problem. Due to what the RCP CC majority and minority said, it could lead very easily to a split situation, or with--for the worse--three Trotskyist organizations competing in H.K. and for the best only a partial fusion process, while we are seeking for an overall fusion.

Secondly, to put the question in general the question of "party-youth" relationship seems to me irrelevant. There is no existing "party" and "youth" in H.K. which would make the question a central issue. This way of posing the problem might lead to hiding what is the present crucial problem: the regroupment of all existing Trotskyist forces in H.K. to stabilize an organization able to answer fully our new tasks.

Democratic centralism is, of course, a very important issue. But the CC majority should, I think, take into account three facts: a) the argument of the minority that the present crisis is due to the RCP weaknesses and could be much more easily overcome in a fused and stronger organization, b) that it is the third time that a major break occurs between the CC majority and its main young militants, so it is a question which poses more broader problems than

the bad behavior of the present minority, c) that the consequences of a third split (or exclusion) of the young from the RCP would have devastating consequences--it would not allow for a full fusion to occur, it would cut the RCP from nearly any capacity of actual mass work, it would harm gravely future possibilities of the RCP to recover an active base in the youth. The third crisis could be the last one!

Those consequences are too grave for RCP comrades and for all the F.I. to underestimate.

It is why my proposal is:

To pose the principled question of democratic centralism in the framework of the future fused organization, to answer by this way to the worries of the minority. But to ask here a clear statement from the present minority on this question.

To use the fusion as the means to overcome the present RCP crisis. In fact it is clearly the only hope to overcome this crisis! And not to [base ourselves on the] crisis to postpone the fusion perspectives.

To change in this framework the agenda of the convention (August) and to put as its first point the fusion question. If not, this point, which is without doubt the most important, might well just disappear from the agenda if there is no agreement on the "youth-party" relationship.

D. MASS WORK

Both the RCP and the RCP CC minority feels [it is] difficult to combine their mass work (specifically in the youth, with the YSG).

Also, the RCP CC minority state that there is a big divergence with the majority on the conception of party building and mass work.

They feel that the RCP CC majority conception is essentially harmed by "clandestine" and inactivism (or mere propagandism).

This is today not clear to me: the RCP CC majority comrades have several times stated that they fully support the mass work of the YSG and the RML. And the future organization is foreseen as publicly leading this active mass work. If there were big divergences here they should be cleared up openly.

But in general I must say that there are much less grave divergences of orientation between the different components of the Trotskyist movement in H.K. than it was the case in several countries where the fusion was successfully achieved.

So I think the best is to put in practice what has already been proposed:

To have regular discussions between the RML and YSG comrades on the situation in HK and mass activities, and to fully involve in these discussions the old RCP comrades.

To propose common interventions in the mass field, and to accept a "moral discipline" between all RCP-RML-YSG comrades, precluding the future organizational discipline of the fused organization.

To fuse progressively RCP and RML magazines, October Review and Equator.

The key question here is the political conviction of the leaderships of each organization of the need, the absolute need, for the fusion. In this framework, I am convinced that the capacity of common work will improve quickly and lay the ground for a effective fusion. If not, concurrence in mass work will lead to concurrence between organizations and will make the fusion more difficult.

RCP CC majority and minority, RML stated their will to fuse.

The RCP CC minority stated that the overall majority of YSG comrades are for such a perspective. The RML has already collectively confirmed their will for a quick and full fusion process to be ended in August.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

It is decisive to accelerate the path to full and quick fusion in H.K. Delaying this process could lead to a deepening of the division and of the crises of the RCP.

The fusion perspective must be taken as the means to overcome the present difficulties (RCP crisis, mass work), and to improve our capacity to answer our new tasks in H.K., toward the integration in the F.I.'s present evolution.

The objective conditions are more favorable than ever. The key question is now the political conviction of the leaderships. The fusion process should be strengthened by an overall discussion between RCP and RML, involving all of them as possible, and involving the YSG militants as well as the former IWP comrades.

The USec bureau should be ready to give its full help to this process, and to act as quickly as possible if required due to the present schedule of the fusion process (RCP convention in August).

Please take into account that this report has been written in English and in a hasty way.

Fraternally
s/Roman